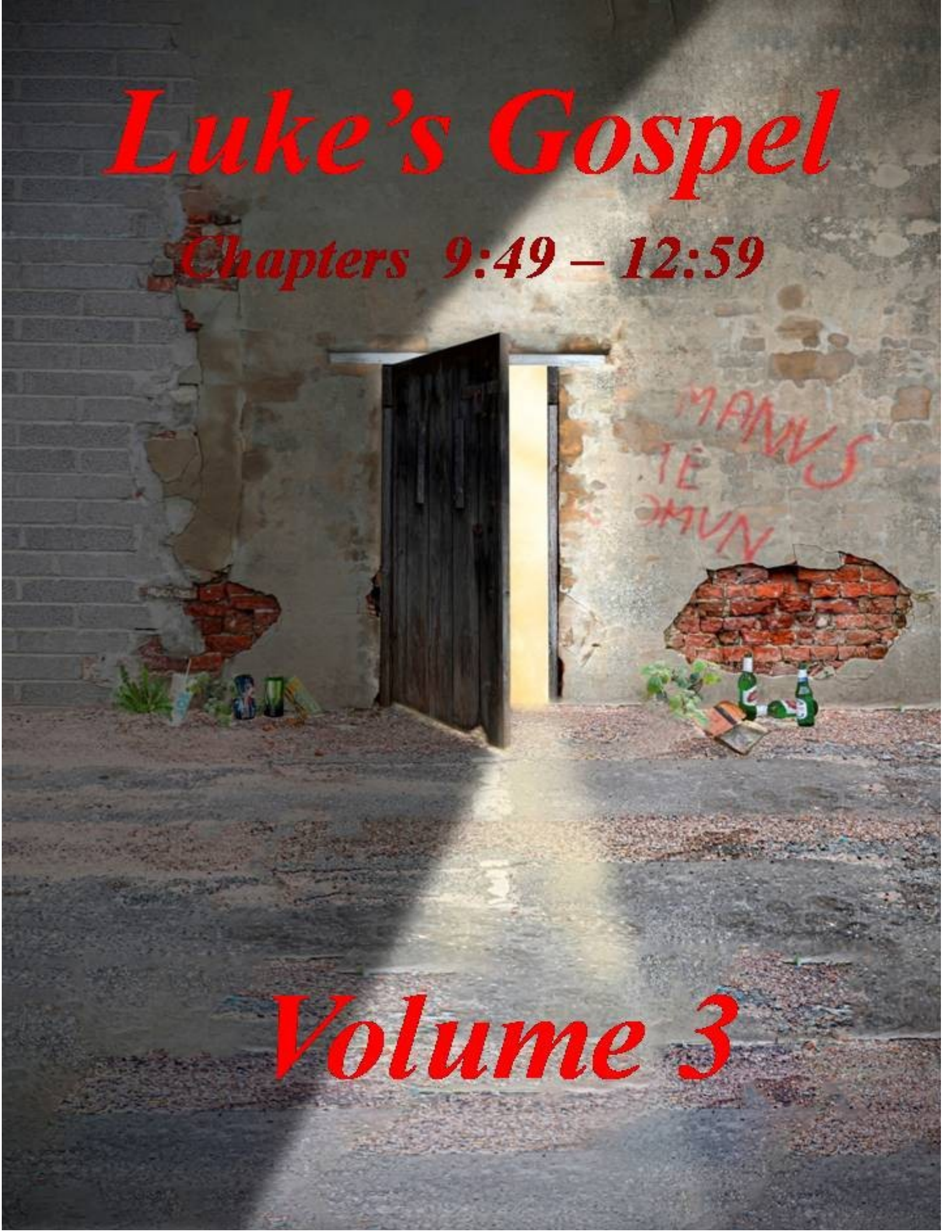
Luke's Gospel

Chapters 9:49 – 12:59



Volume 3

About the cover.

I am very grateful to my dear friend Christine “Chris” Eaves, who has given her time and skill to producing the covers for the 6 Volumes of Luke’s Gospel. The covers show the gradual revelation of Jesus, as you progress from a closed door, to an open door, revealing the Saviour. The covers are a sermon in their own right.

About the artist.

Chris has always been interested in photography. For many years, she sold artwork in local galleries and used photography just as a reference. Gradually though, and with the introduction of digital cameras, the photography became more important than painting.

Chris lives in Weymouth on the South Coast of the UK and works right opposite Weymouth Beach, which presents many opportunities for photography and the light is constantly changing. A few years ago she won a national photography magazine competition and the prize was a Canon 450D.

In Autumn, 2011, Chris was one of the 12 finalists (out of 55,000 entries) in the BBC TV's Countryfile Calendar Competition. “This has given me great spur to push on in this fantastic world of photography. This is a wonderful world and there is so much that I'd love to do, and yet, it seems that time here is so short. I try not to waste a moment!”

A devout Christian, Chris uses her talent to provide devotionals from nature, calendars, linking Scriptures with pictures, to inspire other Christians to look with a discerning eye on the Creator of the Universe, Jesus Christ.

Please visit Chris’s website when you have a moment. https://www.chriseavesphotography.co.uk/

Dedication

This 6 Volume series comprise the ministries given between **October 2021** and **March 2024**.

To those who sat through these ministries, I thank you for your encouragement to me and I hope you too have been encouraged.

Thanks to my amanuensis Shelley for her continual encouragement to get this book published and her gracious correction, suggestions and support to me.

My gratitude goes also to my wife Diana who has encouraged my recovery and been a source of strength, inspiration and love. She has always been there for me, physically and spiritually, on my path back from a stroke.

Love in Jesus,
Mike 24th August 2024

P.S. Do contact me with any queries michael.winnett@ntlworlld.com

Where a Bible version is not stated it is the Authorised Version, otherwise:

- CEV Contemporary English Version
- Darby John Nelson Darby Translation
- ERV Easy to Read Version
- Geneva 1587 Version
- GNB Good News Translation
- GW God's Word
- ISV International Standard Version
- KJV Kings James Version
- LEB Lexham English Version
- LITV Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX Septuagint
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- YLT Young's Literal Translation

Scripture quotations are in ***italic script***. All versions can be found in e-Sword. e-Sword is a fast, effective and free way to study the Bible. e-Sword is feature rich and user friendly with more capabilities than you would expect in a free Bible

study app. Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword http://www.e-sword.net/ Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

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79. They still have not learned *Luke 9: 49 - 56*

Luk 9:49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. Luk 9:50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us. Luk 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

The "disciple who Jesus loved" had still not learned his lesson.[1] John the Apostle was at heart a cruel and vengeful man, not the person we see later on. He may have shown a certain loyalty to Jesus, he may even have been a favourite disciple of Jesus, and that is no comment on his character but bubbling inside of him was what bubbles inside all of us, hard heartedness, unloving and spiteful hearts. He was like you and me and had not learned that a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven should be gracious, gentle and loving. He still wore that coat encrusted with the hardness of the law, with vengeance and retribution.

Looking back over the years at my own behaviour, and at the behaviour of other Christians, I wonder if any of us were saved at the time, because there was in each of us such a hardness of heart. We had not learned to forgive others, we still held grudges and un-forgiven sins, although we would certainly claim to be forgiven. Truly we did not forgive others. We would strive and fight and argue and use cruel words against others, who were Christ's brethren and always we took the moral high ground while, being deep seated hypocrites. God forgive us.

Having answered the disciples as to what it meant to be great in the Kingdom, and what it means to have a non-exclusive ministry, yet another lesson looms for these disciples and Jesus says it like it is. The lesson concerns the elimination of everyone who does not receive Christ, and these Samaritans seemed ripe for this punishment.

Jesus is going towards Jerusalem, to end His ministry there and as He goes, His disciples preach the Gospel in the Samaritan villages and some of the people did

[1] I wonder if John notes this, "the disciple who Jesus loved", because he was ashamed of his hard heartedness, and wanted to show us the exceeding graciousness of Christ's love.

not want to listen. I say, some, because the woman at the well of Sychar and the villagers did hear Jesus and acknowledged Him as Messiah (John 4). The disciples were affronted by the treatment meted to them and Jesus, by some Samaritans, *Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.* In this village the disciples were rejected, and instead of turning the other cheek, they were ready for a fight, and they asked Jesus if they should call fire from heaven upon them. Yes, they do not ask Jesus to bring the fire down, they ask if He wants them to bring it down, *Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord,* ***wilt thou that we command*** *fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?* It was in their power to bring fire down, not Jesus.

Isn't this a bit hypocritical, after all, the Judgement day will come upon all people, *Luk 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; Luk 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Luk 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*. Isn't Jesus doing what He tells the disciples not to do? Yes He is. But then, in case you have forgotten, He is God.

He does not relish the task of Judgement and in a way He is teaching His disciples this same truth. Some look at God as a person who is only too quick to sound judgement on a person, *Jon 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that* ***thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil***.

Others see Him a vengeful God, sitting on His heavenly throne just waiting for an excuse to smite somebody, a God who just cannot wait for the Day of Judgement, excited at the prospect of sending humanity to hell, a cruel and unloving God. But how does this square with Jesus, God with us? If God in the OT is the same as God in the NT, if Jehovah of the OT is the same as Jesus of the NT, then has an unchangeable God really changed?

No, He has not, God has not changed, but our understanding of Him has. Our understanding of God has clarified His position through coming to know Him in the flesh. We begin to see things through His Divine eyes. He came to **SAVE** His people, to rescue them from the power of sin, *Joh 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. Joh 12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for* ***I came not to judge the world, but to save the world****. Joh 12:48 He that*

rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

God, who is Jesus, came into the world as a light to guide us from darkness, and if we will hear the words of Jesus we will be saved but if we will not hear and believe, the Son of Man will not judge us because Jesus did not come to judge. He defers the judgement of those who reject Him, to the end time. He will in virtue of the fact that we have not believed the word of Christ, be judged by those self same words, *"the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day".* He does not need God to judge us, we judge ourselves, *Joh 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*.

God takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner but urges him to repent, *Eze 18:23* ***Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die****? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?.....Eze 18:31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Eze 18:32* ***For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth****, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye*.

The Holiness of God must needs punish sin but He has offered the olive branch, He has come among His creation, He has cried in the streets to them, to seek His mercy rather suffer the inevitable consequences of rejecting Him. It is with a sad heart that He goes to the judgement seat and there is nothing triumphal in the death of a sinner only sadness.

No wonder Jesus turned and rebuked the disciples. They had not understood the mind of God. Their way of dealing with opposition was to kill it, stifle it, kill the Samaritans who did not follow them, make them scapegoats for their own sins. And in this way the failing of a nation, the deficiencies and weakness, is turned upon another nation. Call it what you will, pogrom, holocaust, ethnic cleansing, racial hygiene, genocide, it all amounts to the same thing, and in the Name of Christ people attempt to justify it but Christ rebukes it.

Was this the rational response of the Apostle John to the rejection of the Gospel? Did John seriously think that this was the way go about preaching, like the conquistadors,

> "[The Spaniards] took babies from their mothers' breasts, grabbing them by the feet and smashing their heads against rocks. . . . They built

> a long gibbet, low enough for the toes to touch the ground and prevent strangling, and hanged thirteen [natives] at a time in honour of Christ Our Saviour and the twelve Apostles. . . . Then, straw was wrapped around their torn bodies and they were burned alive."

The atrocities committed in the name of Christianity shall come back to haunt us in this verse. From the attitude of Christians in the first Century to those times recorded in Foxes book of Martyrs, men were killed and burned because they did not follow man's teaching. We might even set the Apostle John up as the patron saint of immolation, "St John the burner", had he not changed his ways.

Listen to Jesus words, "*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of".* Had satan entered John and made him want to call down fire, just as Peter had succumbed to the devil, *Mat 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*. I believe that John was attacked by satan, for I cannot imagine a more satanic thought, a more evil disposition towards the neighbour, than wanting him dead.

Perhaps John thought that he was like Elijah of the OT, a prophet who was sent to wreak havoc on the false prophets, *2Ki 1:1 Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. 2Ki 1:2 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. 2Ki 1:3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron*? The soldiers sent out to find the god of Ekron were consumed by fire, but it is not the same situation and John is not Elijah. John was wrong.

The lesson of just who the disciples were to be like and the teaching of the Son of man, was summed up in this, *Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* That simple message sums up the Christian code of conduct in respect to our fellow man. It forms the basis of how to treat him, whether or not he rejects the Gospel. He is given rights by Christ, the right to peace, the right to no persecution, the right to be left alone, the right not to be harassed on account of the rejection of Christ, and the right to life in this world.

This is the basis of the Hippocratic oath or should I say, the Christian medical practice. It is the conscious effort to save the weak, the helpless, the needy,

without recourse to killing one in favour of another. It is equal rights for the unborn and the mother, the young beginning life and the old, getting ready to leave life. It is the Christian duty to save life. It is the basis of the compassion shown by the good Samaritan.

It is the basis of problem solving among brethren and unbelievers. The bottom line is “to beg to differ” and if a resolution cannot be arrived at, then violence is certainly not the solution. And if the other party turns violent towards you, you have no right to be violent to them, *Luk 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Luk 6:28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. Luk 6:29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Luk 6:30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again*.

It answers the question as to whether we should go to war, or whether we should be pacifist. It seems to me we are pacifist in the face of aggression, ready to lay our lives down for another but at the same time we offer resistance to evil and do not hand over the innocent to the aggressor. Like Jesus, our Kingdom is not of this world, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*.

And that really is it. This world is not our kingdom, we have a short life here, and in that time we are to put the Gospel out without giving deliberate offence, but the one who offends shall be in danger of Hell himself, *Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

It is not a tight line we walk, because we walk in freedom, the freedom to be as Jesus was in this world. This is probably the greatest Gospel witness we have. This is the choice for the disciples, and they eventually chose wisely, eventually, they chose freedom but there are still lessons they must still learn.

.....And they went to another village.

80. Don’t look back *Luke 9: 55 - 62*

Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. ***And they went to another village.*** *Luk 9:57* ***And it***

came to pass, that, as they went in the way*, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Luk 9:58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Luk 9:59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Luk 9:60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. Luk 9:61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. Luk 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

The disciples and Jesus are passing on through Samaria and go from one village that rejected Jesus to another village of Samaria where the local people had a different attitude to Him. One would follow him wherever He went, another would follow Him after he had put his father to rest, another was ready to come after he had said goodbye to his family. These on the face of it were highly reasonable requests, with no sign of an evil disposition behind them, but Jesus had something to say about them and to us.

It seems as if we cannot win, we cannot please the Lord on any account. When we call judgement down, we are wrong, when we are willing to follow Him, we are wrong, what does He want? If you are confused, then rest assured so am I. The first village of Samaritans rejected Jesus but now here is Samaritan village ready to embrace Him, but it seems that that is not good enough also.

What is wrong is our viewpoint, where we are seeing things from. Either you are looking down at this earth or you are looking up at heaven, and when you see that Jesus is looking to heaven the whole picture changes. He is the heavenly man speaking from heaven, the Kingdom of God.

Now before I go into a detailed exposition of the passage, let us ask the question, "Is this the same occasion as in Matthew's account?" *Mat 8:18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. Mat 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Mat 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Mat 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Mat 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead*.

Matthew inserts a similar event to Luke's, just before the trip across Galilee to encounter the demoniacs. Luke's account appears to be before the 70 are sent

out. I think that they were two different accounts. They have a remarkable similarity but the timing does not agree and for this reason I suggest that they were two separate events. I imagine that Jesus encountered many people who said “I will follow you to the ends of the earth” or, “I will come with you after I have done such and such”, time and time again. How could they not desire to follow Him.

A lower estimate of the Jewish population of Galilee was 200,000 persons. From that population, there must have been many questions asked of Jesus, and questions that were repeated in different places that He went. We cannot have them all accounted for and these have been recorded for a purpose. The same is true for Jesus’ ministries, which He must have repeated wherever He went, so we only have 5 ministries written down, the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5 – 7), the Mission Discourse (before sending out the disciples, Mat 9), the Parabolic Discourse (Mat 13), the so called Discourse on the Church (Mat 18), and the Discourse on End Times (Mat 24 – 25). I am sure that there were many occasion Jesus preached on the same subject. He did not confuse the people of the kingdom with many words, but gave them well chosen words.

There is a sense of urgency in Jesus words, an immediacy, because of the times that they are going through. I am reminded of Lot’s wife, *Gen 19:15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. Gen 19:16* ***And while he lingered****, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. Gen 19:17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*. Lot’s wife looked back and was frozen forever.

The people that Jesus addressed everywhere, had to make a decision because the Kingdom waits for no body, like the foolish virgins who slept and were shut out of the wedding feast, *Mat 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Mat 25:2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Mat 25:3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: Mat 25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Mat 25:5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*. The decision that they had to make was not whether to follow Him, but whether to delay to follow Him.

You are not doing God any favours by accepting Jesus, He is doing you the favour. The least you could do is respond immediately to it. But the casual way that men deal with the Gospel call, shows that it is not their priority. I have some unfinished business to do, let me do it, then I will follow on. This shows that the Kingdom has a lower priority than the call of Christ. It is not as important in the scheme of things, to follow Jesus, and the business of this world is far more important, but will it seem important when you get to Glory.

This forward vision, the establishing of priorities that are based on Christ's words, are put into second place because of the demands of this world. You can tell if people have their priorities right by asking them if there is anything that would stop them from dying, stop them from going to be with the Lord, something important making them want to stay here a little longer, something that they still have to complete.

Let us examine the first man (men) who came to Jesus, and said, "*Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."* Jesus replies, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."* What a very strange answer, if it can be called an answer. It certainly does not mean that Jesus did not have a place to sleep, because in Matthew, He is soon sleeping in the boat as they cross the lake, *Mat 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

It is not an easy life that those disciples will follow, so it was necessary to count the cost, *Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?* This man has a view that going to the Kingdom is just like going on holiday because he does not see that it is a hard life, *Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that* ***we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*****.** Yes it is very hard to enter the Kingdom, a bit like a birth, a new birth.

Jesus is saying to the man, its not an easy life following me. Every creature has a home, foxes have their dens, birds have their nests, but Jesus has nowhere in this world because He is passing through this life to a greater Kingdom. You must realise this, that there is nothing here for you, so do not follow me on that account.

The other two people who came to him are not dissimilar to the men Jesus tells them about, in the story of the great Supper, *Luk 14:16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: Luk 14:17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. Luk 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him,* ***I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it****: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:19 And another said****, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them****: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:20 And another said,* ***I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come****. Luk 14:21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*.

Excuses, excuses, genuine ones but none the less excuses. I have more pressing needs than to follow you right away. And I am sure that we all make excuses why we cannot devote our time to service, why the Gospel falls into second place in our scheme of things, why Jesus is a close run second place to the engagements of this life. This article on Christian Discipleship for Dummies, by Dan Dick (October 9th 2015), shows what is wrong with our discipleship.

> I was in conversation with some of my colleagues about the state of The United Methodist Church. We each took a Post-It® Note and wrote what we thought was the most pressing need/critical issue facing the church. Most of the notes were about declining numbers — not enough new members, not enough young people, not enough dollars, too many old people (and them dying off). My note said “Low expectations.” This brought a response from the group that if we expected more from people, it would hasten our demise. I disagree. We have instituted low expectations as a norm for over three generations and it hasn’t served us well. And in recent times we have lowered the bar to the point where it has dented a groove in the foundation — I am afraid we cannot go any lower.
>
> I was talking with a pastor who proudly stated that his church was getting serious about discipleship. This a church of approximately 300 members. He told me that five people (all retired women) are covenanting together to “follow Steve Manskar’s *Accountable Discipleship* book,” and *meet once a quarter for 90 minutes* to model discipleship for the rest of the congregation. I responded, “you mean weekly, don’t you?” He explained that, no, when they all looked at their calendars, they couldn’t commit to more than once every three

months, and even then not everyone would be able to attend every meeting.

In recent conversations with three completely unrelated twenty-somethings I discovered what may be a growing trend. It also may apply to older people as well, but I haven't heard from anyone but these three younger adults. Each one of them explained to me that they have cut-and-pasted their favourite passages from scripture formatted into a single document, downloaded it to an iPad or Kindle, and this is the "Bible" they use. Titled "Kathy's Bible" or "Kevin's Bible," these young people read only the parts of scripture they like. I asked "Kathy" if I could see her "Bible" and I noted that the vast majority of passages came from the Old Testament or New Testament letters — very little from the gospels (Nativity story "in," Passion story "out"). She said, "Yeah, there just isn't as much that's interesting in the gospels…"

My colleague, Don Greer, and I taught a seminar called "The Congregation as a Discipleship System" last year (2014) and one of the resources we recommended is Martha Grace Reese's *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*. This is a very down-to-earth interactive engagement resource to revitalize evangelism as a "normal" practice in the congregation. I checked in with one of the pastors who told us he was really excited about strengthening the congregation he serves in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. He proudly reported that his Church Council is on chapter 2 of the book. (The whole book is 200 pages long, with many illustrations, lots of white space — each chapter is approximately 10-15 pages long.) "When did you start reading it together?" I asked. "Last November," he answered. "You've been reading it for ten months, and you're on chapter two?" I responded. "Well, yeah, we've got lots of other stuff we have to get done, too." he explained, a little defensively.

I was in a church recently where every member received a nametag with the church name across the top, the person's name in larger letters in the middle, and in 6 point type across the bottom, "A Disciple of Jesus Christ". These were all nested on a board in the Narthex, probably about 150 nametags in all. Everyone in attendance was wearing their nametag — so there were about 40 empty slots. I noted that about half of the remaining nametags were still in plastic sleeves that had never been opened. The lay leader explained that those were people who hadn't shown up since the nametags were purchased.

"How long ago was that?" I asked. "We bought them at Easter in 2013," he replied.

The United Methodist Church clarified its mission in 1996 to be "making disciples of Jesus Christ," and amended it in 2008 with "for the transformation of the world." Since 1996, our bishops, general agencies, seminaries, conference leaders, pastors and key lay leaders have systematically eroded the definition of a "disciple." Rarely using the gospels as a reference point, discipleship has become anything anyone wants it to mean. In a survey conducted by myself when I worked at the General Board of Discipleship in 2005, 71% of United Methodists chose "believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God" as "the best" definition of "Christian Disciple". (Other choices included, "being a faithful member of a Christian congregation," "organizing one's life and service around the teachings of Jesus Christ," and "sacrificially striving to become like Jesus the Christ in thought, word, and action".)

We want a definition of discipleship that costs absolutely nothing. People often comment that they think I make discipleship too hard, that I expect too much of people, that I am unrealistic in my expectations. I always wonder where people got the idea that discipleship was supposed to be easy and convenient. Can people be Christian "believers" and not read the Bible and not pray, and not attend church regularly, and not give or serve as an expression of their faith, and not fast, and not share their faith? Obviously, a lot of people think so. But be a disciple? Discipleship has some built-in defining characteristics that are much more demanding than occasionally showing up.

People who haven't shared in public worship for two years should not be called disciples. Those too busy to pray, who have no time to meet with other Christians for accountability and spiritual practice, who neglect a sacrificial commitment of time or money should not be called disciples. Those who do meet to debate carpet colours, criticize the pastoral leadership, snipe over music styles, and decide who isn't welcome are not disciples. Those who only pay attention to the parts they like and that make them feel comfortable and lovable are not disciples. Come on! **Why would anyone want to be a disciple if the key qualification is breathing?**

I think Jesus was quite right to answer as He did, because the disciples took discipleship too lightly, and His commentary on them is summed up in the closing

words, *Luk 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

It is a preparation for the next stage when 70 disciples would go out.

81. 70 or 72 Luke 10: 1 - 3

Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Luk 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Luk 10:3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

First a word about the text which has a variant, either "70" disciples or "72" disciples. Which is it? I cannot tell you of an absolute certainty which reading is true, so I give a reasoned assumption as to what is most logical. The shorter reading, "70" is supported by the majority of manuscripts. It is also supported by a number of early manuscripts such as Sinaiticus (4th Century), Alexandrinus (5th Century) and Ephraemi Rescriptus (5th Century). It is also the reading of P45 which is one of the two oldest, if not the oldest manuscript attestations to this reading and dates to around 100 years or so before Vaticanus or Sinaiticus, the two main manuscripts of the Alexandrian line. (Luke 10:17 P45, 01, A, C, K, P, L, M, W, X, D, Q, X, Y, f1, f13, 28, 33, 157, 579, 700, 1071, 1342, 1424, Maj, Sy-C, f, q, Sy-P, Sy-H, bo,). But there are variants which contain the figure "72".

It still does not answer the question, "which is the true number?" Follow in Truth website states,

> It isn't hard to see, if we are looking for numerical symbology, why the number 70 would be the correct reading. There are more references to 70 such as the 70 years of exile, 70 sons of Ahab and 70 sons of Jerubbaal but none of these seems to have any real relevance as to why 70 would be a symbolic number of disciples chosen by Jesus. But what about 72? When it comes to biblical usage of 72 there really is not much support. There is the 72 descendants of Noah as per the Septuagint of Genesis 10 and that's basically it.

Unfortunately that does not answer the question of which number to choose and it does not answer the question as to why the number was changed. This also has a bearing upon the inspiration of Scripture, for if this is God's infallible word, it

has proved that it is certainly open to question, if not downright wrong. But then, we have not defined infallibility, or what constitutes Scripture.

In this messed up world of sin, I see no reason why the Word of God is not messed up as well. It would be strange if man and Creation were tainted with sin and the Scripture somehow escaped this. Of course, the original autographs were given by God, but did they get changed as they were copied? I don't see anything that suggests that the Word of God that was written down, was subject to a law which made the text inviolable, infallible. We would not have these variants, such as "70" or "72" if it were true. Sin is not counted when we look to authenticity of scriptures. It does not figure, although this is the most important reason we have variants, and I suggest that it is the cause.

What is more, the original languages have been translated, which adds another layer of possible confusion to the text which the scattered nations of Babel attempt to see in their own tongue. What version do you use and why did you choose it? Did you think about the accuracy with which it recorded God's word or did it happen to be the one you were given, like the AV? Are you a King James, AV, adherent because the translation committee appeared godly? What about earlier godly translations, like the Geneva Bible or Tyndale's New Testament? And who are the "experts", the sinful sons of Adam, who will give you the true readings?

There is a parable which Jesus uttered, which talks of a degenerating world, *Mat 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed* ***good seed*** *in his field: Mat 13:25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among* ***the wheat****, and went his way. Mat 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth* ***fruit****, then appeared the tares also. Mat 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? Mat 13:28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? Mat 13:29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but* ***gather the wheat into my barn.***

God lets the wheat and tares grown side by side until the end, and the conflict is always there, the truth and the lies exist to the end.

It may not have escaped your attention that this parable follows on immediately after the parable of the sower. It would be reasonable assumption that they

complement one another, *Mat 13:18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. Mat 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. Mat 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Mat 13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. Mat 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. Mat 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

One parable teaches us about the Word and its effect upon the hearer, the "**parable of the Sower**", and the other parable, the "**parable of the wheat and tares**", teaches us about the good seed that is sown, which is the Word, and the bad seed that is lies, is also sown at the same time. This parable of the "wheat and tares" deals with the **Word** and the **Counter Word**.

God leaves the Word and the Counter Word to have their effect unimpeded. There will in consequence be the truth, the Word, and there will be lies, the Counter Word. God does not stop the lies, but lets them exist until He pulls up the lies by their root at the end of days and reveals His Kingdom, *Rev 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Rev 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth* ***and maketh a lie****.*

We see from the beginning of man's life on earth that there was an assault on God's Word. Why should satan change his modus operandi, *Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman,* ***Yea, hath God said****, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* From the beginning an attack was made upon God's word and it has continued on from then, even Jesus was subject to the Counter Word of satan, *Luk 4:6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. Luk 4:7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. Luk 4:8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*.

It should not surprise us to see an attack made upon the written documents as well as the other things. The sins of man will leak into the fresh pool of God's word, for all have sinned, and even when he is converted, a Christian man may lose objectivity, due to his own prejudices and so tamper with the word. Textual variants in the New Testament manuscripts arise when a copyist makes deliberate or inadvertent alterations to the text that is being reproduced. But it is amazing in spite of the bleak picture that I paint that there are so few variants in the text. Here is what Norman L. Geisler said in "A Note on the Percent of Accuracy of the New Testament Text",

> Some have challenged the accuracy of the New Testament (NT) manuscripts based on a statement in our book *A General Introduction to the Bible* that inadvertently attributed to Bruce Metzer the figure that the NT is copied with 99.5 percent accuracy. However, this is an inconsequential criticism for several reasons. First, NT textual authorities Westcott and Hort estimated that only about one-sixtieth rise above "trivialities" and can be called "substantial variations." In short, the NT is 98.33 percent pure. Second, Greek expert Ezra Abbott said about 19/20 (95 percent) of the readings are "various" rather than "rival" readings, and about 19/20 (95 percent) of the rest make no appreciable difference in the sense of the passage. Thus the text is 99.75 percent accurate. Third, noted NT Greek scholar A. T. Robertson said the real concern is with about a "thousandth part of the entire text." So, the reconstructed text of the New Testament is 99.9% free from real concern.
>
> Philip Schaff estimated that of the thousands of variations in all the manuscripts known in his day, only 50 were of real significance and of these not one affected "an article of faith." Even agnostic NT critic Bart Ehrman admits that "*In fact, most of the changes found in early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology.* Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes pure and simple-slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled words, blunders of one sort of another" (Misquoting Jesus, 55).
>
> Famous British manuscript expert Sir Frederick Kenyon summed up the matter well when he declared that: "The interval between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down substantially as they were written has now been removed. *Both the authenticity and the general integrity of*

the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established" (Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 288).

The veracity of what is written must also show in the consistency of what is written. The moral content must be consistent, the Historical content must be consistent, the Scientific content, the empirical information, must be consistent, and the Archaeology must be consistent and so on. It comes together as a whole, fit for purpose. It does so because it is God's word not man's word.

I appreciate that we haven't answered the question of 70 or 72 disciples and I don't think we can honestly do so. The Bible, is like an old well kept car, with many parts. We make the first copy of a part, the prototype and it is perfect, and we put all of the parts together. Then we copy the car and whoever copies it may or may not leave his mark on it. The maker of this copy may not be careful in the manufacture and nobody knows why he made details of it different, certain alterations. This process goes on over the years until we are where we are. Still we have a car that is like the original, with very few scratches on the bodywork, and it is not possible at this distance in time to say who caused the scratches, if it were an accident or if it were deliberate. Sin affects all things.

But it makes little difference to the story whether 70 went out or 72 went out. It made little difference to the Mission, but it does show that Jesus had many more close followers than merely 12. It was a small army, and these are the ones that we know about. There were 120 disciples gathered together in Jerusalem, *Act 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. Act 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an* ***hundred and twenty****,*)

Back in Galilee, there must have been hundreds of disciples, loyal followers who for whatever reason could not leave there homes. The Bible mentions 500 persons who saw Jesus at one time after His resurrection, *1Co 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 1Co 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 1Co 15:6 After that, he was seen of* ***above five hundred brethren at once****; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 1Co 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles*. Doubtless, many others too, whose lives were not recorded.

But it was not to be so great a number as we would have imagined, in spite of the miracles, signs and wonders accompanying the ministry of Jesus. In fact it seems like it was not a very effectual ministry. Not everyone was convinced or saved

and the reason lies in the parables of "**the Sower**", and the parable, the **"wheat and tares**".

82. Disciples not hearers only *Luke 10: 1 - 3*

Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Luk 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Luk 10:3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

Why didn't Jesus save everybody? It would have decreased the suffering of sin in this world, made it a better place to sojourn, made everyone nicer and we could have had heaven on earth, you know, like the JW's show in their pictures, happy people, eating oranges, walking in fields of green, sunny skies, not a worry in the world.

Jesus could have smoothed the way of the evangelists of old, with welcoming committees in every town, no resistance whatsoever, every day being like Palm Sunday, shouts of Hosanna wherever He went. He could have rescued the whole of mankind at one go, but He did not. For a rescue mission to humanity, this one certainly appears to fail. The disciples were to have a rough ride, in fact they were being thrown to the wolves, *Luk 10:3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*

Not only were they thrown to the wolves, Jesus had put the burden onto the disciples to pray to the Lord for more labourers to enter the harvest. Why didn't the Lord more send more into the harvest to start with? If 70 were not going to be enough labourers, He could have asked for more, far more effective than the stammering disciples, who could not heal the demon possessed boy. What is the reason for this?

If you think about it, those young men that Jesus called, had not been disciples very long, and here they were being sent out. Can you think of those early days of your discipleship being given the same task? The first summer that I came to the Lord, I got involved with an outreach programme in Weymouth called the "Ark", and along with other brothers and sisters, we Evangelised the youth. I look back at those efforts as being "sincere" but lacking so much, amateurish and without biblical teachings, we were going to change the world. It would have been much better to have trained before going out as amateurs.

But surely that is the point? These disciples were going to find out how difficult it was and they were going to learn on the job, just what it meant to be a disciple. Let us step back a minute and look at the bigger picture. The general view of salvation is one where somebody is saved, comes to Jesus, is born again, is baptised and then they are shuffled off to a church, where they spend the rest of their lives singing hymns, praying and listening to people like me spout on week after week. No mention of becoming a lowly disciple or if they do, it is because they are subject to a six week course in discipleship, and that is it.

The Great Commission comes to us as the parting words of Christ, and we were told to become disciples. The new believers in Jesus day were put straight into a discipleship program, and that was to be the pattern for all men, and a pattern for life, but once again the translation got in the way, *Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and* ***teach*** *all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Mat 28:20* ***Teaching*** *them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen*. The KJV has "teaching" all nations, and that is not quite the meaning. And you can see how that we get another error in the scripture, not in the original text but in the translation of that text. Whether this was deliberately put in to make us subservient to the clergy is not clear, but it is an error.

Let us look at another version, another translation, the Literal Version, *Mat 28:19 having gone, then,* ***disciple all the nations,*** *(baptizing them—to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all, whatever I did command you,) and lo, I am with you all the days—till the full end of the age.*' The word rendered "teaching" in the KJV, verse 19, is in fact μαθητεύω = mathēteuō, which means to become a pupil; to enrol as scholar, whereas the word rendered "teaching" in verse 20, is διδάσκω = didaskō, to teach or instruct, *Mat 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*

We are to make disciples and the difference between "teaching men" and "discipling" is quite different. You say, don't be so pedantic, there is no difference, but there is.

Discipleship is more than just learning the teachings of Christ, which the pew warmers do very well every week. The qualities of discipleship are first and foremost, following Christ, and include going to share the Good News to non-believers, teaching, loving God, loving others, standing out, denying ourselves, being firm in God's word, fellowship with other believers, imitators of Christ,

dedicated, steadfast, and investing in missions. We see that disciples were called Christians, not simply people who learned about Jesus, but people who acted like Him, *Act 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And* ***the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch***.

Discipleship must be taken more seriously, and there must be a commitment to it. I let Ken Braddy explain,

> What's the difference between a teacher and a teacher who is a discipler? There's a lot of difference, actually. The church needs teachers, but the church really needs disciple-making teachers. I'd like to introduce you to 5 differences between teachers and disciple-making teachers, and see which one you lean toward in your own ministry as a group leader. Our goal is to become more like the disciple-making teachers described below.

1. **A teacher shares information, while a discipler shares life**. What happens outside the classroom is just as important, or maybe more important, than what happens inside the classroom. A disciple-making teacher knows the people he leads, where they live, where they work, and he enjoys spending his free time getting to know them more deeply.

2. **A teacher aims for the head, while a discipler aims for the heart**. A teacher typically loves to be thought of as the expert in the room, the one who knows things and has important ideas and content to give to the group. A disciple-making teacher, however, aims about 10 inches lower and shoots for the heart. His goal is to be used to help bring about spiritual transformation; at the heart of transformation is a change in not just knowledge, but in attitude and action.

3. **A teacher measures knowledge, while a discipler measures faith**. A teacher might focus on how much he or she knows, and how much of that is transferred into the minds of group members. On the other hand, a disciple-making teacher measures success by the increasing levels of faith that his or her group members demonstrate. Obedience to Christ becomes the measuring stick.

4. **A teacher is an authority, a discipler is a servant**. I actually knew a teacher who did not allow the people in his group to speak during one of his Sunday morning lectures. He had a lot of ground to cover, and questions and dialogue just slowed him down. After all, he'd studied all week and knew lots of interesting facts to share about the Bible. A disciple-making teacher views themselves very differently. That kind of teacher sees himself as a servant, the one who is last in line, the one who seeks to meet the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of his group members. The disciple-making teacher exists for the group, not vice-versa.

5. **A teacher says, "Listen to me" while a discipler says, "Follow me."** Some teachers love to hear themselves talk, but a disciple-making teacher says, "Do as I do, as I attempt to follow Christ."

Discipleship has empathy and sympathy but the teacher can teach without the slightest empathy, for it can be all theory to him. Systematic theology, dogmatic theology, historical theology, a theology of the church, all good stuff but the disciple needs more, he needs pastoral theology.

Being in today's western church is like being thrown to the teddy bears. If they do not like what they hear, they shut the door, get a new speaker that suits their tastes, avoid confrontation and develop a church which suits them and a worship that they think suits their God. Discipleship is only developing what the particular church considers it to be, not what it truly is.

However, discipleship is universal, and by that I mean that every body of believers, every church congregation, in every country, in every age, should have the same pattern as was left by Jesus. They all have the same biblical teaching, the same biblical doctrine, in fact if you went to a congregation of believers in China, Africa, South America, you would feel instantly at home, one with the congregation of the faithful, *Act 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Act 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

You would not be out of place with the Christians at Jerusalem, because Christ is the same, *Heb 13:7 Don't forget about your leaders who taught you God's message. Remember what kind of lives they lived and try to have faith like theirs. Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ never changes! He is the same yesterday, today,*

and forever. CEV. You would not be out of step with them because you would be disciples, with the same goals in the faith.

And does anyone cease to be a disciple? I don't know of one person who comes near the Lord Jesus in the nature and behaviour that He expected, not one. I don't see the pope, the archbishop of Canterbury, the head honcho of any denomination or church, coming near to Him. We all complete this pilgrimage as disciples, not one having come to the "measure and stature of the fullness of Christ". It is our goal but we strive to get there. Any man who says he has learned enough, that he is sure he is like Christ, is a deceiver. All men go on and all men remain disciples.

At the end of their lives, the apostles were unashamedly, disciples. Every apostle was a disciple, but not every disciple was an apostle. Every person who believes in Jesus is called His disciple. It is a Church full of disciples and those who are not disciples but church goers, are not part of the Church that Jesus builds.

We have these people who have got into the church but which do not belong there. They take the "discipleship" and turn it into a ministry which Christ did not institute. They make themselves chiefs and rulers of the people, just like in the Gospel times. They turn the church into their image and likeness and they behave as lords and not servants. Discipleship has been lost.

To these 70 disciples Jesus entrusts the task of evangelism but He also tests their ambition for the Gospel ministry, *Luk 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few:* ***pray ye*** *therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

Now you may believe that the sovereignty of God is defined as,

> "The sovereignty of God means that He has total control of all things past, present and future. Nothing happens that is out of His knowledge and control. All things are either caused by Him or allowed by Him for His own purposes and through His perfect will and timing*, Rom 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Rom 11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Rom 11:35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? Rom 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.....1Co 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* He is the only absolute and

omnipotent ruler of the universe and is sovereign in creation, providence and redemption."

You may believe in Absolute Sovereignty, which I do, by which God controls absolutely, but in that Sovereignty He allows a synergy with man, and it is one of those areas in which God seems to work with man. Some people believe it is pointless to pray if God is Sovereign, *Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?*

But Jesus asks the disciples to pray, to pray for their work, to ask God to intervene with more workers. It remains within the domain of God to answer that prayer, but none the less it is something we should pray for. It is something every Christian can pray for, and you don't have to be an Evangelist to pray for this.

I wonder if the Lord will ask why we didn't pray for more workers? Were we too self satisfied with the ministry, did we have the complacency of the saved, I am alright and that's all that matters? Did we just slip into a life of forgiveness without thinking of anybody else? If we had emphasised discipleship instead of just salvation, we would not have our complacent view of life and we would embrace the Gospel with a realism that the old disciples had. We would truly work with that consciousness of working together with God, not simply sat in a waiting room, filling time with the world's things until we are called to come to meet Christ.

We asked the reason why Christ did not give the disciples an easy ride, with all that power at His Sovereign command? The disciples were learning to work with God, learning the hard lessons of life. God did not wrap them in cotton wool, they were saved to serve, in an army not a rest camp*, 2Ti 2:3 As a good soldier of Christ Jesus you must endure your share of suffering. 2Ti 2:4 Soldiers on duty don't work at outside jobs. They try only to please their commanding officer.*

They would learn in time that they were expendable, like you and me, and despite the best efforts of man to make monuments for men, others will take their place, and they will be forgotten, but Jesus will be forever.

83. Planning with God *Luke 10: 4 - 8*

Luk 10:4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. Luk 10:5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. Luk 10:6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if

not, it shall turn to you again. Luk 10:7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. Luk 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

It was Charles Spurgeon who said, “Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.” Whether its one on one, or preaching to a multitude, we need support, but what kind of support? The first thing they do today when organising an evangelistic campaign is a fund raiser because it is seen as essential to drive the mission. Larry Rosenbaum explains in an article, “Organizing A City-Wide Outreach”,

> Our ministry sends out a monthly newsletter that relates what is happening in our ministry, announces upcoming outreaches, sometimes contains a brief teaching on evangelism, and presents our needs. We try to make our needs known in a straightforward manner. Often, we have seen God meet needs that we never told anyone about. While God usually provides our needs through His people, **He wants us to depend on Him,** not on people. We also take offerings at meetings composed primarily of Christians, but we don’t take offerings at evangelistic meetings.
>
> The Christian world has been inundated by all kinds of financial appeals. I receive mailings from about a hundred ministries. Some are honest in their request for finances, but many use various gimmicks to manipulate people to give to their ministry. Some pastors and evangelists use similarly dishonest methods to get large offerings at churches. These methods do generate large amounts of funds, which is why so many ministries use them. However, such methods are dishonouring to God and a stumbling block to unbelievers, who laugh at the greed and hypocrisy.

God “wants us to depend on Him” but we “take offerings”, in other words we hedge our bets. This is markedly different to George Muller, who set out to show that you could rely directly upon God,

> There was, however, an interesting side effect to the cholera epidemic. It left Bristol with countless numbers of orphans.
>
> One day, a little girl in tattered clothes, just 5 or 6 years old, approached George Müller on the street. She was piggybacking her little brother, who was fighting a bad case of the sniffles. The girl asked

> George for money, saying her mother had died of cholera and her father was missing. George gave her the money she asked for but couldn't get her off his mind. As the little orphan girl wandered away, he wondered where she would sleep and what would become of her little brother if she too were to become ill. It burdened George that not enough was being done for the poor and parentless children of Bristol.
>
> Though he was still entertaining the idea of leaving England for a foreign mission post, God laid it on his heart to stay right there and offer hope to the destitute. He had to trust in God. Now, there have been many fine souls who have started agencies and ministries to care for the poor and homeless. But few were shaped like George Müller. From the very beginning, he decided never to ask anyone to fund his vision to care for orphans! He believed that if it were of God that he feed, clothe, and educate these children, then the supplies and staff would come.

We tend to have a sense of urgency for missions that overcomes our patiently waiting upon the Lord. Let us go back to the second mission of the disciples and learn some lessons from it. The initiative did not come from the disciples it came from our Lord, a point easily missed in our rush to get started. The disciples had no idea what to do and it was Jesus who commanded them to go and how to do the work.

The word "missionary" is not used in the English Bible, but it is in the Latin translation of the Bible. The word mission originated in 1598 when Jesuits, the members of the Society of Jesus, sent members abroad. Christ says the word when He sends the disciples into areas and commands them to preach the gospel in His name. The term is most commonly used in reference to Christian missions, but it can also be used in reference to any creed or ideology. So we could call the disciples "missionaries" during this outreach period. An "apostle" also means one who is sent, so apostle and missionary are interchangeable terms.

Jesus told them, what to carry, where to go broadly speaking, but non-specific, how to conduct themselves, how to greet people and to avoid idling and time wasting, what they were to do (heal the sick and preach the kingdom in preparation for Jesus coming to the towns). How did they divide up the places to go? I leave you to think on that.

The brief given by Jesus directs them where to go and where not to go. For us today, if there is no specific guidance given, I would suggest we do as the Gadarene, *Luk 8:38 the man who had been healed begged to go with him. But*

Jesus sent him off and said, Luk 8:39 "Go back home and tell everyone how much God has done for you." ***The man then went all over town, telling everything that Jesus had done for him***. I often see missionaries go to far off places around the world, as if to be a missionary you have to spend years and years in a foreign land. They may be called to go but I do not see the work of a missionary being very long in a place.

I come back to the subject of discipleship and put another quality before you, *1Pe 5:2 feed the flock of God that is among you, overseeing not constrainedly, but willingly, neither for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, 1Pe 5:3 neither as exercising lordship over the heritages, but patterns becoming of the flock*. We are to become "types" that the people of God can follow. That type must lead to one who develops people, a person who can in turn, fulfil the Christian ministry, *Eph 4:11 It was he who "gave gifts to people"; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. Eph 4:12 He did this* ***to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service****, in order to build up the body of Christ.*

In other words you work yourself out of a job. If you are telling me, that you have preached Christ, and that you are following this pattern, you are hardly successful if it takes you years and years to bring the people up to a level where they are self sufficient. What sort of teaching are you giving and what sort of control are you exercising, *Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Act 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Act 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember,* ***that by the space of three years*** *I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Act 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*.

Paul didn't labour for a whole life time setting up the Ephesian church. The missionary should aim to get indigenous workers as the church leaders, and so give the work entirely over to local people, who will grow their own church. But oh no, they cannot let go of the reigns, they do not trust the people to guide and lead themselves, they have no confidence in Christ to lead His people, and they must intervene on His behalf. But note, "Confidence in Christ, is confidence in the brethren".

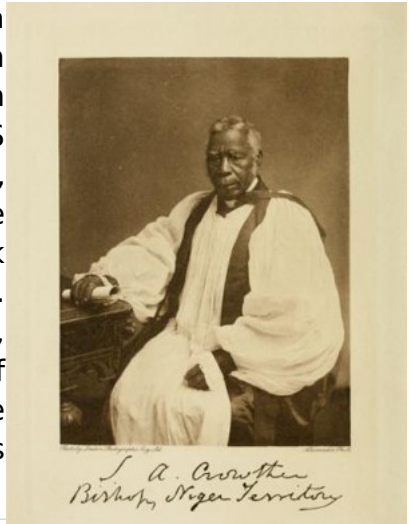
Churches also condone this controlling attitude by seeking to import pastors rather than raise men from their own ranks, propagating a system which God did not make, *Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in*

order the things that are wanting, and ***ordain elders in every city****, as I had appointed thee:* The elders came out of the cities to which they were appointed, not from somewhere else. A pastor should be home grown not imported. How did they hear the voice of God calling them, and how do they interpret providence to make this call, they should say, like Paul, *Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.* There are not many pastors that can say that.

This form of control leads to a governing body, the individuals who Lord it over the brethren, controlling who is and who is not acceptable to preach, who goes where and for how long. It is the foundation of all sects, or heresies for so the Greek word means, and the major denominations are just that, a sect.

This story will show how we are loathe to put locals in charge. Samuel Adjai Crowther (1807-1891) was an African missionary and bishop**,**

Crowther was born with the name Ajayi in Osogun, in the Egba section of the Yoruba people, in what is now western Nigeria. When about 13, he was taken as a slave by Fulani and Yoruba Muslim raiders and sold several times before being purchased by Portuguese traders for the transatlantic market. His ship was intercepted by the British navy's anti-slave trade patrol, and the slaves were liberated in Sierra Leone. There he became a Christian, taking at baptism the name of an eminent clergyman in England, Samuel Crowther.



Excelling at school, he became a mission teacher and one of the first students of the Fourah Bay Institution, founded by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1827 to train able Sierra Leoneans for Christian service. He assisted John Raban and (probably) Hannah Kilham in their studies of African languages, and in 1841 he joined J.F. Schön as a CMS representative on T.F. Buxton's Niger Expedition, contributing signally to it. He studied at the CMS college in London preparatory to ordination in 1843, a landmark for the Anglican ministry. With Henry Townsend and C.A. Gollmer, he then opened a new mission in Yorubaland, centered in Abeokuta, by now the homeland of Crowther's Egba people. (He discovered some close relatives there and was the means of conversion of his mother and sister.)

> His role in producing the Yoruba bible, which set new standards for later African translations, was crucial. Crowther's visit to Britain in 1851 influenced government, church, and public opinion about Africa. The CMS secretary, Henry Venn, saw Crowther as a potential demonstration of the feasibility of self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating African churches and in 1857 sent him to open a new mission on the Niger. **The entire staff was African**[2], mainly from Sierra Leone, and Venn moved toward an Anglican version of the **"three-self" formula** by securing Crowther's appointment in 1864 as "Bishop of the countries of Western Africa beyond the Queen's dominions." In the upper and middle Niger territories Crowther pioneered an early form of Christian-Muslim dialogue for Africa. He oversaw J.C. Taylor's ground-breaking work in Igboland and directed the evangelization of the Niger Delta, with notable results at such centres as Bonny.
>
> In the 1880s clouds gathered over the Niger Mission. Crowther was old, Venn dead. The morality or efficiency of members of Crowther's staff was increasingly questioned by British missionaries. Mission policy, racial attitudes, and evangelical spirituality had taken new directions, and new sources of European missionaries were now available. By degrees, Crowther's mission was dismantled: by financial controls, by young Europeans taking over, by dismissing, suspending, or transferring the African staff. Crowther, desolated, died of a stroke. A European bishop succeeded him.
>
> Part of the Niger Mission retained its autonomy as the Niger Delta Pastorate Church under Crowther's son, Archdeacon D.C. Crowther, and at least one of the European missionaries, H.H. Dobinson, repented of earlier hasty judgments. Everyone recognized Crowther's personal stature and godliness; his place in the history of translation and evangelization has often been undervalued.

That is really sad, but it shows how an organisation cannot let go and "let God". It is typical of the interference and control that foreign missionaries exercise over indigenous churches.

[2] The three-self formula or three-self principle is **a missiological strategy to establish indigenous churches**. Its principles are: self-governance, self-support (i.e., financial independence from foreigners), and self-propagation (i.e., indigenous missionary work).

This world is all about control and controlling the individual. If the devil cannot stop man from believing in Christ, he will stop him exercising his freedom in Christ, *Gal 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:* The liberty of Christ then becomes a system of controls and controlling elite, and mankind has no longer the freedom to believe what God teaches, but what man teaches, and he goes back into the fallen world.

The Gospel was soon trampled down by the boot of man, but Paul recognised the power behind this idea, *Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? Gal 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh*?

84. The Mission *Luke 10: 8 - 12*

Luk 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: Luk 10:9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. Luk 10:10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Luk 10:11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. Luk 10:12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

Let me remind you of the conditions when the disciples, 70 of them, went out on their second mission.

1. They were told by Christ where to go.
2. They took no wages, They did not get paid for being disciples.
3. There was no job security.
4. They were told not to be picky eaters but to eat what is put before them, *Luk 10:7 Stay with the same family, eating and drinking whatever they give you, because workers are worth what they earn. Don't move around from house to house.*
5. They were to accept hospitality from who offers it regardless of who they are.
6. They didn't linger about on the way, idling with strangers, *Luk 10:4 Don't take along a moneybag or a travelling bag or sandals. And don't waste time greeting people on the road.* CEV.
7. The disciples did not stay long in a place or do return visits.

8. Once they are evangelised they do not keep evangelising the town. It was once in a generation.
9. It was peace to the home that they went into or else they took their peace with them. They didn't leave God's blessing with them, *Luk 10:5 As soon as you enter a home, say, "God bless this home with peace." Luk 10:6 If the people living there are peace-loving, your prayer for peace will bless them. But if they are not peace-loving, your prayer will return to you.*
10. They were to heal the sick and preach the Gospel.
11. They were to shake the dust off their feet if the people would not heed them, *Luk 10:10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Luk 10:11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you:*

There is an echo of the words, *Luk 7:32 You are like children sitting in the market and shouting to each other, "We played the flute, but you would not dance! We sang a funeral song, but you would not cry!"* CEV. But this is no game, this is not done by ignorant children, this is the absolute word of Christ.

It seems unfair to those towns that they had to make up their minds so quickly. Couldn't they be given more time to consider the implications instead of having to make their minds up instantaneously? But do not forget, that they had a lifetime to consider the truth of the matter. They had synagogues in which Moses was preached every Sabbath. They knew what was at stake, like the rich man, who was reminded by Abraham, *Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*.

They did not need much time to decide if they would follow Christ to the Kingdom because the people of Israel had one distinct advantage, *Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen*. After all, they were Jews.

They did not have to have the origin of mankind explained, they did not have to explain how Israel was adopted, how the Jewish people were given the covenants, the Law, who the fathers the patriarchs were, and where the Messiah would come from. They were different from their Greek brothers, from the Gentiles. Paul has to take their instruction, the Greeks, from the very beginning

when God made man, and he stands on the Areopagus and makes the declaration, *Act 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. Act 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. Act 17:24* ***God that made the world and all things therein****, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands*;

There are in the NT two types of persons, the enlightened Jews and the ignorant gentiles, and although it doesn't take a lifetime to get the gentiles up to speed with the Gospel, it does take them longer. So why is it necessary for these Jews to have to be evangelised, in view of what I said about them having the advantage of the laws of antiquity, why did they have to be Evangelised?

There were two basic reasons. The outward nation of Israel did not hold to all the precepts of God. A small remnant only held to the truth, *Rom 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.* ***For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*** *Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but****, In Isaac shall thy seed be called***.

The "remnant" are the result of this, *Rom 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved*: The word λεῖμμα = leimma means a remainder, what is left after the rump is gone. Just how many it is, I cannot say, but I will give an indication.

You are acquainted with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, how that God would destroy them for their wickedness, and how Abraham prayed for the godly in that place that they would find mercy, and how the angels lead Lot out of the place before God rained down fire and brimstone upon it, *Luk 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; Luk 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.* Three people only were saved, 3 out of 125,000 (see Christ and Abraham p.57) in Sodom. That is a remnant.

This remnant features in many of the scriptures as does Sodom, and so we are bound to look at them. Israel is compared to Sodom, *Isa 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small **remnant**, we should have been as **Sodom**, and we should have been like unto **Gomorrah**. Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*

In other words, Israel would have been utterly destroyed but for God leaving them a remnant, *Jer 23:14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: **they are all of them unto me as Sodom,** and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.....Eze 16:48 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Eze 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.....Amo 4:11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.*

The Lord shows throughout the prophets that the people of Israel are no different to the people of Sodom**, except for a remnant**. The majority of the nation of Israel was under judgement, except for this remnant of the people. This stands for all time as an example of God's Justice and God's mercy, as Peter says, *2Pe 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) 2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth **how to deliver the godly** out of temptations, and to **reserve the unjust** unto the day of judgment to be punished*:

So going back to the evangelism of the 70, it can be seen as "God's call to the godly remnant". The people who rejected the call of the Kingdom, were just like the Israel of the time of the prophets, who had a form of godliness but they denied the power of it. They did not want Christ to rule over them, they did not want the Kingdom of God, only the Kingdom of man. They were the ones who rejected Him and they were already set on that path, so it did not require a lot of time to make the decision. The people who received Jesus and His Kingdom were the remnant.

That is why I think that Christ uttered the words, *Luk 10:12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.* It was a reminder of the prophets of old, that Israel was like Sodom, but more than this, the current generation was worse than Sodom. It had degenerated further and like the world was in a downward spiral.

There is something else which Jesus alludes to here and that is the degrees of punishment of people, as this author says,

> The biblical authors are clear that hell is a place of divine judgment on sinners. Furthermore, many authors speak of more and less severe degrees of punishment, dependent on a number of factors in one's life. These factors include the extent to which a person has abandoned himself to sin, the extent of one's influence on other people towards sin, and the amount of knowledge of the truth that one had and rejected. This is not to say that hell will be less than perfect torment for some, but Scripture indicates that some will have a greater capacity for suffering or that some will bear a fiercer measure of the wrath of God upon them.

But the scriptures however do not refer to "hell", or Hades, or Gehenna, but to punishment. Is it temporal or eternal punishment that we are dealing with?

Take these statements*, Luk 12:47 And that servant, **which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes**. Luk 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more……..Heb 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Heb 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? Heb 10:30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, **The Lord shall judge his people**.*

The Lord will judge His people, the believers in God will be judged. Just as the are demerits there are merits, rewards too, *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 1Co 3:13*

*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon**, he shall receive a reward**. 1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, **he shall suffer loss**: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*.

How are we to understand this?

85. Judgement Luke 10: 12 - 16

Luk 10:12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.
Luk 10:13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Luk 10:14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. Luk 10:15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. Luk 10:16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

We are dealing with our Lord's comment on the people who reject the message of the Kingdom and the consequences of that rejection. Particularly, we are considering the statements of our Lord which imply that **some will be punished more than others**. I quote one observation on this subject,

> "These verses talk about a "servant" who knew the Lord's will, and about one that did not know the Lord's will. In both cases, the "servant" **represents unsaved people** because they are receiving punishment for their sins. The Lord Jesus took all of the punishment for the true believer's sin. Only the unsaved will be punished for their sins. The "servants" described in Luke 12:47-48 represent unsaved people because they are **receiving punishment for their sin**." (emphasis mine)

This is a rather general statement and requires a lot of qualification. For example, "do believers escape punishment?" *Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and **scourgeth every son** whom he receiveth*. We would not need correcting but for the sin and waywardness of our

hearts, *Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,)* ***dwelleth no good thing****: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

There is no doubt that the Christian comes under the rod, and that is part of the process whereby Christ sanctifies him, and it is not a bad thing, *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*. It is a mark of sonship, of adoption, that God takes the trouble to correct us, *Heb 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons;* ***for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not****? Heb 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

So the statement above, "the "servant" **represents unsaved people** because they are receiving punishment for their sins" is not correct, as king David will also attest, *1Ch 21:17 and David prayed, "It's my fault! I sinned by ordering the people to be counted. They have done nothing wrong—they are innocent sheep. LORD God, please punish me and my family. Don't let the disease wipe out your people."* CEV.

But the believer though he sins and is scourged, yet he is forgiven, *1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So what is the meaning of, *Luk 12:47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luk 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*.

It is here that I will bring together a number of ideas the show the unity of Scripture. I will show the Parable of the Sower, the doctrines of Calling and Election, the teaching of the Church and Israel and the teaching on the Remnant, these all bear upon one another and the singular truth of Christ and His people.

The Parable of the Sower shows three classes of people. The Seed or the Word will either fail at first planting, or will be heard for a while by some who will eventually give up, but some will come to full fruition in others. Looking at the ones who hear for a while, *Mat 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Mat*

13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. Mat 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

What would you call this second class of people? They are in that moment believers, and you would treat them as such, for there is no outward reason that they are not following Christ. But it is temporary, and they become among the lost, *Mat 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he* ***that endureth to the end shall be saved****.* Yes, that's right, if you think you are saved by just having made a profession of faith years ago, and forgotten all about it, that lack of enduring is your death warrant.

The third class, the ones who endure, the ones bearing fruit, are also called the Elect, *Isa 65:8 Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. Isa 65:9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and* ***mine elect shall inherit it****, and my servants shall dwell there*.

This special group of people are spared the prolonged tribulation at the end of earthly history, *Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened*.

I see no difference between the Elect and the Called, ***Rom 8:28*** *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are* ***the called*** *according to his purpose. Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate* ***to be conformed to the image of his Son****, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified*. These people all come "***to be conformed to the image of his Son***", and I take the Elect to be the same as the Called, and these are the same as the fruit bearers in the parable of the Sower. Incidentally, Predestination is to make you into the image of Christ and is not looking at anything else.

These also I take, to be those people elsewhere called the "remnant", *Isa 10:20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. Isa 10:21* ***The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jaco****b, unto the mighty God. Isa 10:22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness*. They are saved.

Now this is the point about the remnant, **it is both an OT teaching and a NT teaching**. *Rom 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a* ***remnant*** *according to the election of grace.* It is relevant to us in the NT, *Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with* ***the remnant*** *of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*.

As Paul says, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:* There is an "Israel" which is not of Israel, only in outward form, but there is a true Israel, a remnant. Likewise it must be true to say, "**for they are not all Christian which are Christians**", there is only a remnant of NT believers according to the election of grace.

"Israel" of the OT becomes the "Church" in the NT, *Act 7:37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. Act 7:38 This is he, that* ***was in the church in the wilderness*** *with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:* Christ was with those Israelites in the Church.

As there was an Israel corresponding to the Church, and as that Israel had a remnant who were saved, so it is now true of the Church, that it has a remnant, which only, are saved. And this has implications for the so called Christian church, because not every one in it, every one who subscribes to it, shall be saved, only a remnant, and these are they, "*which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*."

The idea that all people who make a profession of faith are Christians, that those who say "once saved always saved", do arrogantly abuse the Scripture. I happen to believe in that doctrine, but it must be clarified. You may say it when you are in Glory, "once saved always saved", but until then you are presuming to say that you are elect, and without the accompanying works of faith, that counts for nothing. If you do not keep what Jesus teaches, you are a Christian in name only,

Luk 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Why indeed? *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*.

"I have my beliefs" is the cry of unbelief, it is the cry of the person who will not align their beliefs with the beliefs of Christ. I have my beliefs as opposed to His beliefs. The two do not agree. And on this rests your eternal salvation, whether you believe His words or the words with which you reason, from your own wicked heart. Friend, you have no right to believe other than what He says, His commands, but if you do you will not be in His camp.

I return to the subject we began with, considering the statements of our Lord which imply **that some will be punished more than others**. Who are these people? The people who do not believe in Jesus get punished, that is clear. But what about the believers who appear to get punished? Let us read the passage, *Luk 12:45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; Luk 12:46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. .Luk 12:47 And that* ***servan****t,* ***which knew his lord's will****, and prepared not himself,* ***neither did according to his will****, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luk 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*.

The passage is talking about faith in the end times, when the Son of Man comes. Some of the servants get annoyed at His delay and start to take it out on His other servants and start behaving badly. It shows that they are believers, or else why would they be called "servants", servants who know the Lord's will, and they are servants who do not do the Lord's will and so get punished.

We might not like to admit it, it might seem to go against the deep doctrines of scripture, the doctrine of assurance, against the doctrine of predestination to Christ, the doctrine of "once saved always saved", but if we think about it, these doctrines only apply to the Elect. The Elect, the godly remnant of Israel and the Church, that group in the Parable of the Sower, the people who bring forth fruit,

they and they alone are those who are addressed by the deep doctrines of scripture.

For those who do not choose to believe the things of the Saviour, only “woes” remain, *Luk 10:13 Woe unto thee, **Chorazin**! woe unto thee, **Bethsaida**! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Luk 10:14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. Luk 10:15 And thou, **Capernaum,** which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. Luk 10:16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me*.

These cities of Sodom, of Tyre are compared with the towns of Jesus generation, who would have repented in sackcloth and ashes at His preaching. This shows us that the world is a much worse place than in former days. But this also shows that the towns in which Jesus preached, the very places He came to, did not profit from the encounters. Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, where Jesus lived and where He did some of His most notable miracles, it seems that they were done for nothing.

These towns had seen the Greatest Prophet, the Greatest Teacher, the Messiah, the King of Kings, and yet with all this proof of his Lordship, they chose not to believe in Him. How hard is it to believe when not having seen Him, but how much more blessed, as Jesus said later to Thomas, *Joh 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*.

The words given to the disciples are clear, *Luk 10:16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me*. Despising and rejection of Christ is the rejection of God the Father.

86. The lesson of the return

Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Luk 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Luk 10:20 Notwithstanding in this

rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

The disciples return full of joy, not that there was joy over people being saved, people converted by their Gospel, but by the devils who were subject to them. They were concerned about their authority rather than Christ's work in the soul of man. They still have a lot to learn.

Paul says, *1Co 13:1 What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels? If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 1Co 13:2 What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge? And what if I had faith that moved mountains? I would be nothing, unless I loved others. 1Co 13:3 What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive? I would gain nothing, unless I loved others. 1Co 13:4 Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or 1Co 13:5 rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. 1Co 13:6 Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. 1Co 13:7 Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting*. CEV.

The disciples don't love the people that they are sent to, or they are partial and biased in their love for some and not others. Tinkling cymbals, noise but no substance, disingenuous, and empty of any empathy. If they had faith to remove demons it would gain them nothing, because they lacked love. Love shown in the interest you take in people, love in the care and welfare of the lost souls. It was lacking in them and it is sadly lacking in us, for we too are like the disciples.

Back in the 1970's, at what is arguably the peak of Pentecostalism, the "tongues" movement was in full flow. The baptism of the Spirit, was manifest in "speaking in tongues", and it was a phenomenon which caused the person to utter words which were not understood by anybody except one who could interpret them. I don't intend to go into the genuineness or otherwise of this phenomena, except to say that it was pressed upon Christians as an experience they should have, and if they did not have it, for whatever reason, they were viewed as second class Christians.

The gift of tongues, instead of being a unifying experience among Christians, as it was at Pentecost, became a divisive influence in the churches, a "them and us" phenomenon, *Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Act 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own*

language. Act 2:7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? Act 2:8 ***And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born***?

Like the disciples, this group of Christians had gotten themselves ahead of the rest by experiencing some phenomenon and they were rejoicing in the power it gave them. Look at me, they seem to say, look what I can do, aren't I just something, someone who is exalted above the rest of men? How soon do we to forget the gifts of God, not simply salvation, but all that we are in Him, from birth until death. Suddenly we become something in our own right, as if what we can do is generated by us alone without the power of God. And before we know it we have pushed Christ off of the throne and jumped in there ourselves.

Suddenly, its no longer what the Lord has shown me, enabled me by His grace to do, given me the wisdom to achieve greatness among men, given me the wisdom to discover His realm, but in science, in nature, in human relations, in the interpretation of history, in scripture, it becomes look at what I have found out, look what I have discovered, look at me.

Have you seen the monuments men erect to great men, that far outlast the works which they did? Have you seen the volumes that men write about great artists and architects of former ages, detailing their truly remarkable lives? Together with Michelangelo and Raphael, Leonardo is considered one of the pillars of the Italian Renaissance. Born in 1452, his career began when this great period of art was heating up, and he continued to keep up with his younger colleagues throughout his career.

Here is a brief resume on his life,

> Da Vinci literally translates to "of Vinci," which is his hometown and that's why you'll still find that most museums and academic books simply refer to him as Leonardo. Leonardo was born out of wedlock to Ser Piero, a wealthy Florentine notary, and a young peasant girl named Caterina. Leonardo's mother married an artisan shortly after his birth. For all of his genius, it might be surprising to know that Leonardo didn't receive much formal education. He learned the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but much of his deep learning came later in life. For instance, Latin, which was the language of academics at the time, was something he largely taught himself, and advanced mathematics, a topic he was passionate about, only entered his life in his 30s when he started devoting himself to the subject.

There are some studies that suggest left-handed people are more creative; and, if true, that is certainly the case with Leonardo. Recent historians believe that Leonardo may have even been ambidextrous. His artistic output was relatively small. In fact, there are only about 17 surviving works that can be definitively attributed to him. Part of this was due to his busy mind. Occupied with scientific research and engineering matters, he often went through long stretches where he wasn't accepting commissions or painting much. As was typical at the time, Leonardo began his artistic training as a teenager thanks to his father's good reputation, and he was able to enter into the studio of respected artist Andrea del Verrocchio at age 15.

Leonardo's thirst for knowledge also extended to the human body. Not content to study what was already out there, he deepened his knowledge by performing as many as 30 human dissections at hospitals in Milan, Florence, and Rome. Many sources have described Leonardo's passion for animals and wildlife. Moreover, he challenged the morality of consuming animals in his writing. Altogether, this evidence strongly suggests that he was a vegetarian. Renaissance art historian Giorgio Vasari recounted a story of Leonardo, in which the young artist would purchase birds for sale so that he could set them free.

Leonardo's talents also extended into the musical sphere. Not only was he described as an accomplished singer, but he was also talented on the lyre and wrote musical compositions in his notebooks. He even created a silver lyre that was shaped like a horse's head—an item that was later gifted to Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan.

As a left-hander and frequent writer, Leonardo filled his notebooks with a mirror script—which is a mirror image of normal text. It is theorized that this approach was probably faster for him, as he could write from right to left. In addition, he created a variety of symbols that he inserted within his notes. These strategies also disguised the content of his writing at first glance.

Leonardo entered into an agreement with the notorious Cesare Borgia. Son of Pope Alexander VI, he was commander in chief of the papal army and known for the ruthless way he maintained control and tried to dominate different Italian states. Leonardo spent 10 months as a "senior military architect and general engineer." As such, he travelled around Borgia's different territories to survey them. He also created

many city plans and topographic maps, which foreshadow modern cartography.

Clearly, he was as we say “a genius”, what we would call a polymath, and Leonardo was ahead of his time. What he thought about religion and God is far less clear. I think he held the views of his age, nominally a Christian catholic. I find no acknowledgement to God for the gifts he had, no overtly Christian faith and it was not a subject that he dwelt upon.

If Leonardo did not fully recognise God in his life, there was a man who did, Bezaleel ben Uri, ben Hur, ben Judah. *Exo 31:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Exo 31:2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: Exo 31:3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, Exo 31:4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, Exo 31:5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship*.

He had similar qualities and gifts to Leonardo but worked to produce the world’s greatest work which we might call the **Imitation of Christ**. This was the Tabernacle, the focus of worship, which had the outline of Christ in all its splendour, hidden in plain sight, *Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not……Joh 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water*.

Moses had been given the plans of the Tabernacle, and he was to be the quality controller, *Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount……..Exo 26:30 And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.*

But Bezaleel ben Uri had been given the mind of God to see Christ and to disguise Christ. Never in the history of the earth was such responsibility handed to a man. What happened to him? How he acquires this skill, whether this came upon him suddenly, or with his growth and maturity it became more and more refined, until he was given the full wisdom, understanding, knowledge, workmanship, and skilled craftsmanship, of his calling, we do not know. But he became God’s architect to Moses quality controller.

It is like the other incarnation of the Tabernacle, the Temple. It was conceived in the same way, *1Ch 28:11 Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, 1Ch 28:12 And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: ……. 1Ch 28:19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. 1Ch 28:20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD*. David conceived it, Solomon executed it. And Solomon had Divine wisdom like Bezaleel.

This all obviously points forward to Christ, *Heb 3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; Heb 3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house;* ***whose house are we****, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*. The Tabernacle, the Temple and ultimately Christ are all the same works of God. When Jesus sat looking at Herod's Temple, He saw through the bricks and mortar to the reality of heaven, *Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:****21 But he spake of the temple of his body***.

This great man Bezaleel, this wise and often unrecognised sage, saw the future in Christ, and modelled it with the skill he had been given, and then disappears from Scripture. No statues of him, no monuments, nowhere to mark his grave, but the testimony of Scripture holds him dear.

Now look at the disciples, they wanted to become something, to be a great "me" in the kingdom, to sit on God's right hand, and here they were rejoicing in the power that God had given them. They should at least have learned from history. They should have seen that God's great men eventually crumbled to dust and all that remained of what they should be like was that precious soul. But they could not see it yet and their flesh was strong in them.

They were rejoicing at demons being subject to them, no ordinary thing, and certainly something to rejoice in, but Jesus saw their rejoicing for what it was, and says to them, *luk 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in*

heaven. They should have been thinking that this was a sign of God's love to them, and He had inscribed their names in His book of life.

The gifts we all have come from God. Leonardo's gift was from God though he did not seem to acknowledge it. Bezaleel's was a gift of God and he certainly used it for God but it did not bring him to prominence, and the disciples had a gift and rejoiced in the gift not the giver of gifts.

When will we see that we are all of us, cogs in the wheel of life. "Without our aid He did us make" as the "old 100th", says, and that is us. We are made according to His purpose, to do what He wills and by invitation enter heaven. Nothing we do is from us, or from out of our minds that was not conceived first by God. I suppose you could say, we are an expression of God but whether we see it is another matter.

Our Lord reminds the disciples and us of the battle then and now raging, *Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*. The more that we take hold the kingdom of heaven the more does satan fall, until it is finally complete, and Christ is all in all.

87. Revelation

Luk 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, ***that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent****, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. Luk 10:22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Luk 10:23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: Luk 10:24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

I remember, in the first months of coming to know Christ, that a friend of Diana's who was a Christian came to visit us. We had a time of sharing and it was suggested that we read a passage from scripture. I chose 1 Corinthians 13, but, and this is the reason I remember it so well, the girl said, "Oh no, let's read something else, I've read that". It seemed that, unless you had a perfect memory, once was quite enough when it came to reading your Bible.

Recently we attended a neighbour's funeral, and we had spoken to this old lady on occasion, but though not hostile to the Gospel, she could not whole heartedly give herself to Christ. Then there appeared on the coffin, at the funeral service, an old Bible, pocket size, about A6 size if you know what that is, covered in brown paper. This was considered to be a sign of her faith, although sadly it had lain in her bookcase for years, and under that brown paper, it was pristine. For a lifetime, she had that Word in reaching distance, but it remained at arms length, and that Word was nothing more than a good luck charm.

A few weeks ago we went out to lunch with my pension advisor and his wife. During a pleasant meal, he asked me if I had read the Bible all the way through. I told him that in 50 years, I had read it through many times. It only occurred to me afterwards that this was the way the world viewed the Bible. It is a book for specialists, for theologians, for nerds, for people with nothing better to do. For the majority, the Bible just contains some memorable stories, selected readings and that's it. It was like that story I read from Dan Dick,

> In recent conversations with three completely unrelated twenty-something's I discovered what may be a growing trend. It also may apply to older people as well, but I haven't heard from anyone but these three younger adults. Each one of them explained to me that they have cut-and-pasted their favourite passages from scripture, formatted, into a single document, downloaded it to an iPad of Kindle, and this is the "Bible" they use. Titled "Kathy's Bible" or "Kevin's Bible," these young people read only the parts of scripture they like. I asked "Kathy" if I could see her "Bible" and I noted that the vast majority of passages came from the Old Testament or New Testament letters — very little from the gospels (Nativity story "in," Passion story "out"). She said, "Yeah, there just isn't as much that's interesting in the gospels…"

Do you begin to see the truth of our text? "*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, **that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent**, and hast revealed them unto babes:"* The Sovereign Lord has hidden the Word from some and revealed it to others. It is a revelation to some people but nothing to others. It is a revelation about Jesus, *Rev 1:1 **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John*:

There are some people who are just not invited to share in the things of Christ. Doesn't this go against the preaching of the Gospel? No, it does not, it confirms the Gospel, *Joh 6:44 **No man can come to me,** except the Father which hath*

sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day, and that is in John's Gospel. Nearly all men have heard the Gospel, and at this stage in history it has been preached and the full Bible translated (as of September 2020) into 704 languages, the New Testament has been translated into an additional 1,551 languages and Bible portions or stories into 1,160 other languages. It is not that the Gospel is unavailable, it is that men are not invited to share it.

The Bible was translated just for **YOU**, not for someone who takes it for an outing on their coffin, their funeral day, when it is too late. It was given for you to read and you are its beneficiary, not the person who can take it or leave it. Christ is thankful for this and rejoices in this, *Luk 10:21 In that hour **Jesus rejoiced** in spirit, and said, **I thank thee**, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; **for so it seemed good in thy sight**.*

It should make the people of God not so harsh on the poor souls who cannot respond to the Gospel. It should make them less frustrated the men cannot hear the Gospel. We are servants, mere labourers, whose task is to sow the seed but it is God who brings it to fruition, *1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*.

I think that this is one of the great signs that a person is in the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is that they pursue Christ, they continuously look for Christ at the source of the knowledge of Christ. Do you remember those men of Berea, *Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so*. They did not occasionally take their Bible out, they kept it out and they used it daily.

They refined their vision of Christ through the word, and this is the great miracle of faith, *Joh 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*. Here in lies the reason that Christ will not appear until the end of the age. It is so all who seek Him and find Him do so through faith, *Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye **saved through faith; and that not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God: Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast*. And through faith we see Him and we see Him clearer by the day.

I am reminded of another scripture that is very dear to me, which the Lord gave me as He drew Himself to me, *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except*

ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

That spoke to my condition, and that I should become a child, not grow up and become cynical, world weary, despairing of learning and seeking endlessly to know about my place in the universe. I should become as a child, trusting, simple, unquestioning, looking always at the parent, hearing His words and holding to them, having knowledge that is sufficient for my state and believing Him, that it is enough to know Him, even when I might know more. I should not seek my greatness, but His, I should not seek to become someone but I should stay in the shadows of life, speak when spoken to, and trust to hear the voice which says, *Luk 18:16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Luk 18:17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein*.

And on a practical note, if I cannot speak the Gospel to the understanding of children, I have failed.

The statement of the Sovereignty of God, with which we are confronted, occurs in the passage about evangelism, so that not to evangelise and rely on Sovereignty alone to save is foolish. It is like praying to God, “give us this day our daily bread” then doing nothing about getting the daily bread. It all works together in God’s plan.

And that plan delivers everything to Christ, who made everything. While we are but a small part of that plan, there is a much bigger PLAN, *Luk 10:22 **All things are delivered to me of my Father**: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.* The Apostle Paul puts it this way, *Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, **whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven**.* Not just on earth, parochial, limited to this world, but Universal and beyond this realm, to the Heavens of God.

Do you remember that verse, “I saw satan falling as lightning from **heaven**”? Have you asked yourself what satan is doing there in HEAVEN in the first place? Some say that he was cast out at the beginning when he apparently sinned, or when he caused Adam to sin and was cast out of Eden. Others point to Ezekiel’s prophecy and say that it speaks of satan’s fall, *Eze 28:12 Son of man, take up a*

lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Eze 28:13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

That however speaks of the king of Tyre, not the fall of satan, if you read it. In Job it appears that satan is quite comfortable in the presence of God, *Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Job 1:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.* So the devil does not appear cast out yet.

I do not find he is ever cast out until this point in time, *Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,* and that is what makes Jesus statement even more significant. This is the point in Scripture that the book of Revelation speaks of, *Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ:* ***for the accuser of our brethren is cast down****, which accused them before our God day and night. Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death*.

The accuser of the brethren is cast down, his power is fading, the Church is rising, it is battering down the very doors of hell and they shall not prevail against her, *Mat 16:18 …… the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. It does not need a large army to defeat satan but it does need a faithful one.

This is the seminal moment of the Gospel. The Exodus of Jesus had commenced at the Mount of Transfiguration, and Peter talks about the building of "tabernacles", and the 70 disciples/elders go out to work for Jesus, and the Judgement has come to those towns, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, and from there the Gospel goes out and the demons are subject to the disciples, their names are written in heaven, and satan is cast out of heaven. "*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,* ***Now is come salvation, and strength, and the***

kingdom of our God, *and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."* From thence He comes to Jerusalem and His earthly Exodus is complete. It shows us that ALL things are delivered to Him. *Rom 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

The Gospel of Luke is more that a series of cameos of the life of Jesus. From the outset, when He is born, He assumes the mantle of Moses and He is delivered into Egypt and comes as the faithful deliverer of His people. The events in His life follow a pattern, such that when He was on the Emmaus road, after the resurrection, He explained, *Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them* ***in all the scriptures the things concerning himself***.

And that is why we are blessed, *Luk 10:23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: Luk 10:24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

88. The lawyers approach to faith *Luke 10: 25 -28*

Luk 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Luk 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? Luk 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Luk 10:28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

This story which leads into the "Good Samaritan", is I think, placed here because it relates to what Jesus has just said*, Luk 10:23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: Luk 10:24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* Jesus says, that they are blessed (it is another beatitude) because they see and hear these things which Jesus says.

We might conclude it is enough to hear and see these things, but there is one very important point that Jesus has omitted and which He now brings out, namely the works of faith*, Jas 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being*

alone. Orin another version*, Jas 2:17 Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead!* Faith, saving faith must lead to good works, it cannot of itself save passively, it must actively outwork. But much more that this, on the subject of "works and faith", you must have that important ingredient in the mix, in your life, Jesus Christ.

In order to illustrate this, the Lord causes a lawyer to enter our picture. The modern-day definition of a lawyer is a person whose profession is to represent clients in a court of law or to advise or act for clients in other legal matters. This term lawyer or lawyers appears seven times in the New King James Version of the Bible. However, what the Bible referred to as lawyers in that day and time, Jesus day, was somewhat different than our current version of this profession. When the Bible refers to a lawyer, it is meaning someone who was an expert or scholar in the Mosaic Law. These were religious leaders who were teachers of the Law of Moses. They were not attorneys who were hired to file lawsuits or to defend individuals in court. As seen in our verse, which some versions of the Bible refer to as lawyers, other versions call them experts in the (religious) law.

Here is a man who knows the law, is a professional at it, who can run rings around the normal citizen in the things of Moses. He is probably like those disputers in modern Judaism, the Rabbi's, the writers of the Mishnah. This lawyer wanted to tempt, or rather test Jesus, and to see if He really knew about the Law, or whether there was an inconsistency in His teaching. But to the Jew, his test was easy to answer, because observant Jews consider this question important. The answer to the question posed is answered in "the Shema", "hear O Israel.....", and was considered to be the most important parts of the prayer service in Judaism, and its twice-daily recitation as a mitzvah (religious commandment).

"**What**", he says, "**shall I do to inherit eternal life?"** Jesus answers*, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*

The answer is given from what is known as the "Shema", in Hebrew, the "hearing". Many Jews say the Shema three times a day: in the morning, in the evening and before they go to sleep. Shema Yisrael (**שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל**), "Hear, O Israel", and this succinct statement has become so central to the Jewish people, so that it is the climax of the final Ne'ilah prayer (lit. "closing"), the fifth prayer service recited before the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the Day of

Atonement, when the gates of heaven are being “closed”, and is traditionally a Jew’s last words on earth.

It is also written upon the Mezuzah (meaning the doorpost), on a parchment containing the Shema, as a prayer to remind the Jews of their duty to the Lord. The lawyer was using his question to take Jesus to another more difficult question, “Who is my neighbour?”

It seems that you can “*inherit eternal life*” by way of the commandments, as these verses hint, *Lev 18:4 Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. Lev 18:5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments:* ***which if a man do, he shall live in them****: I am the LORD……..Lev 20:22 Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them:* ***that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out……****Deu 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God,* ***to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth****: Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Deu 28:3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Deu 28:4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Deu 28:5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Deu 28:6 Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.*

BUT, Jesus knows that the just shall live by faith”, *Hab 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* There is no mention of doing anything as Martin Luther saw. One day while in Rome, Luther visited the Scala Santa or Holy Steps, brought back from the Holy Land and believed to be the very steps from Pontius Pilate's palace that Jesus climbed on the day he was convicted. A Christian writer tells us,

> "One day, among others, wishing to gain an indulgence which the Pope had promised to everyone who should on his knees climb up what is called Pilate's Stair, the Saxon monk was humbly crawling up the steps, which he was told had been

> miraculously transported to Rome from Jerusalem. But while he was engaged in this meritorious act, he thought he heard a voice of thunder which cried at the bottom of his heart, as at Wittenberg and Bologna, *'The just shall live by faith.'* These words, which had already on two different occasions struck him like the voice of an angel of God, resounded loudly and incessantly within him. He rises up in amazement from the steps along which he was dragging his body. Horrified at himself, and ashamed to see how far superstition has abased him, he flies far from the scene of his folly"

That was Luther's prompt to start a reformation. As Paul had said, *Tit 3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Tit 3:5* ***Not by works of righteousness*** *which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Tit 3:6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;*

There is the seeming problem, on the one hand scripture seems to speak of rewards for obedience to the commands, and to contradict itself in the same breath showing you can do nothing, but appeal to the mercy of God for forgiveness and everlasting life. But the Jew in the land of Israel, and the lawyer is a Jew, had already entered in to a covenant with God, the basis of which was "do the commandments" and you shall keep the land. It was to be Israel's "forever", but that phrase requires some clarification. What is "forever", eternal?

> The Hebrew word olam (עוֹלָם) means in the far distance. When looking off in the far distance it is difficult to make out any details and what is beyond that horizon cannot be seen. This concept is the olam. The word olam is also used for time for the distant past or the distant future as a time that is difficult to know or perceive. This word is frequently translated as eternity or forever but in the English language it is misunderstood to mean a continual span of time that never ends. In the Hebrew mind it is simply what is at or beyond the horizon, a very distant time. A common phrase in the Hebrew is "l'olam va'ed" and is usually translated as "forever and ever" but in the Hebrew it means "to the distant horizon and again" meaning "a very distant time and even further" and is used to express the idea of a very ancient or future time.

The lawyer saw time this way, and "eternal" was his way of seeing time. Jesus answers him in that manner, and the keeping of the commands was the way to have "eternal life". But the lawyer had already presumed that he was saved and therefore one of God's chosen people, and it never entered his mind that he

wasn’t and he does not mention it but goes straight on to his concept of eternal life.

What he did not ask, and here is the important question, that goes far beyond his concept of “ad olam”, eternity, was , “What must I do to be saved?”. That is the real question, *Luk 7:50 And he said to the woman, **Thy faith hath saved thee**; go in peace.....Luk 18:41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. Luk 18:42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: **thy faith hath saved thee**.....Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Act 16:31 And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house**.*

It is something not to be presumed that because your parents were religious, by some miracle of osmosis, the fairy dust has rubbed off on you, *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham*. It does not rub off on you, and to presume salvation by birthright is extremely dangerous. In fact it is as dangerous as infant “baptism”.

Such is the soul of the self-righteous. The man who does not consider himself to be much of a sinner, the man who does not need the death of Christ, because he is quite capable of making the deficit up to God, and he can easily by-pass the Christ, and make up with good works any shortfall which God would hold against him. There are untold millions who see Christ’s death as an unnecessary thing, not for them, because they do not see themselves as having anything wrong with them. They have absolutely no understanding of sin and man’s true relationship with God.

I was like that once. I was about 20 years old and was getting quite guilty about the sins that I was racking up. I knew that what I was doing was wrong and I felt that if there was a “god” I had better do a bit of good, show a bit of contrition, or else it would be too late. I cast around for things to do, and I thought that as “god” liked people who turned up on Sunday, or so I thought, I would join them. I went to church but did not really understand the rituals. The vicar was pleased to see me and he did not tell me I was wrong in what I was doing, so I was I thought, correct. I would become a Christian and I would do some “Christian” things. I thought that God would look kindly upon my efforts to be good, although I went on in my own way and my own sins when it suited me.

I never once apologised to God, never said I was sorry for my sins, and I suppose that His silence condoned my actions, rather than the fact that He ignored me. I

never once thought of Christ as a significant figure in God's plan. So I went my way and when I thought that I had done enough religion, I lapsed back into my old ways but I had at least topped up my faith. And what of the Bible, that lucky charm of good sayings, that was just for the professional's, besides I had little time for it. I had another go at being a Christian at the age of about 23 years, with no more success.

The lawyer too thought that he could do something to be worthy of eternal life and our Lord does not disabuse him of his thought for in his own mind the lawyer was righteous already, he just wanted merit points, he wanted God to say that he had done so much better than others, that he deserved eternal life, and here is your reward for all that you have done, thank you. In his mind it was naturally his, an inheritance, like a true son of Abraham he would gain an entrance, an inheritance, into the Kingdom.

But Jesus says on another occasion that this is not the way his servants behave*, Luk 17:7 If your servant comes in from plowing or from taking care of the sheep, would you say, "Welcome! Come on in and have something to eat"? Luk 17:8 No, you wouldn't say that. You would say, "Fix me something to eat. Get ready to serve me, so I can have my meal. Then later on you can eat and drink." Luk 17:9 Servants don't deserve special thanks for doing what they are supposed to do. Luk 17:10 And that's how it should be with you. When you've done all you should, then say, "We are merely servants, and we have simply done our duty." CEV.*

The lawyer is like many people who "hear" the word, but are clueless as to the operation of that word. For example, they will know what the law says in respect of the Sabbath day, but have no idea of what to do about it in the 21st Century. They have learned by rote the 2 chief commands, and the 10 commandments, and they have learned the other 613 case laws, yet still they have no practical knowledge of how to apply them. Their lives are lived in a mechanical tick box system that has a series of set answers to questions.

If you do something and reckon it to be a sin, you look it up in a table of sins and cross reference it to a remedy. If such and such is wrong then you have to do this and this and that sets the world in order. Its all mapped out for you and as long as you follow the steps it is fine. It is like learning by wrote, and that is just what the priests and the Levites did, except their book did not say anything about people that get mugged by robbers and how you should behave towards them.

The Lord throws them a curve ball, it comes outside of their field of vision. Well, they know love your neighbour, and that a big tick. The question which follows shows them they have not got a clue as to who the neighbour is.

89. The good Samaritan

Luk 10:29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? Luk 10:30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Luk 10:31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Luk 10:32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. Luk 10:33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, Luk 10:34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Luk 10:35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Luk 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? Luk 10:37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Having shown Jesus that he knew the commands of God, the lawyer wanted to justify himself to Jesus, and so he asked of Him, “Who is my neighbour?” He wanted to show Jesus that he was even more righteous and so he asked this question. Presumably he had an answer as he thought he knew the answer to, “Who is my neighbour?” But it is not told us what he believed. Jesus tells him who his neighbour is, who every man’s neighbour is, and it is about knowing more than a few laws set in stone. The answer lies in the nature of God Himself.

The term neighbour requires defining, *Lev 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. Lev 19:16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD. Lev 19:17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Lev 19:18* ***Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:*** *I am the LORD*.

That speaks of the fellow who is an Israelite, but some people who were not of Israel, were treated kindly as well, *Lev 19:33 And if **a stranger** sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. Lev 19:34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall **be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself;** for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God*.

Alright, we have two classes of people, Israelites and strangers, but is that all, what about the other tribes they were told to exterminate? *Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, **the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them;** thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. Deu 7:4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. Deu 7:5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. Deu 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*. They had a strange way of loving those “neighbours”, because they killed them.

In ancient Israel, they certainly did not love everyone but exercised extreme caution about having anything to do with the heathen who would corrupt them, *Deu 7:4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.*

No doubt you had forgotten, that Israel was a sinful people, but there are sinners and great sinners, gross sinners, and all sinners are guilty before God. But the sinners in Israel were in part redeemed sinners, and they could be led farther astray by living with gross sinners.

In the culture of ancient Israel, a type of Christ’s true Kingdom, obviously, things which could corrupt man were like the forbidden fruit. The things which corrupted the flesh are seen in Christ’s Kingdom, as a parallel object lesson, as things

corrupting the Spirit. This distinction between the earthly kingdom of Israel and the heavenly Kingdom of Christ, results in a change of attitude and a change in definition to the word “neighbour”. It is not that the law has changed so much than it has expanded, and expanded to include all men.

The reason lies within the heart of man. *Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. Mat 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery*.

Sin had worked its way like a cancer into men’s hearts. “Hardness” of heart was a disease which consumed them, but it was primarily hardness towards God which overflowed in hardness to men. In order to mitigate in some measure that hardness, the Lord had made concessions to that hard heart. He allowed certain things, like divorce under certain, specific circumstances, to allow the hard heart not to burst out with hatred towards the woman that he would divorce. It did not solve the problem it merely depressurised it.

Likewise, it was sin in the heart of man that that affected others, and if God allowed the “gross sinners” to live, it would lead Israel to greater sin. For the sake of Israel He must destroy the sinners, but “*but from the beginning it was not so”.* The forefathers had got on well, for example, Abraham and Isaac got on well with the Philistine kings, both called Abimelech.

Jesus corrects the long held view of “who is my neighbour” in another place, *Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, **Love your enemies**, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*.

With the lawyer, He is giving an extreme illustration of who your neighbour is. Jesus chooses a controversial nation, the Samaritans, and we get a feeling for the utter contempt with which the Jews held them in, and they thought Jesus was also one of them, *Joh 8:48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* It was only a Samaritan leper who returned to thank Him for healing, and that must have angered the Jews, *Luk 17:16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Luk 17:17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed?*

but where are the nine? Luk 17:18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

Why you may ask did Jesus not pick a Roman, the story of the good Roman, and why does He choose the Levite and the Priest as representatives of the Jews, instead of the Tribe of Judah or the tribe of Dan? I think that the Roman was too political to have in the mix, He needed someone nearer to home, someone who was religiously despised but someone of the same religion as the Jews. He needed people who were known for their religion, and a representative of Levi, and one from within the tribe of Levi who was a Priest, the best Israel could offer. He also needed all three natives to be from the land of Israel.

Jesus offers us these characters, all religious persons, the Samaritan, the Levite and the Priest, all practicing outwardly a form of Judaism. The Samaritans have a very interesting history as Wayne Brindle points out,

> The development of Samaritanism and its alienation from Judaism was a process that began with the division of the kingdom of Israel, and continued through successive incidents which promoted antagonism, including the importation of foreign colonists into Samaria by Assyria, the rejection of the new Samaritan community by the Jews, the building of a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim, the political and religious opportunism of the Samaritans, and the destruction of both the Samaritan temple and their capital of Shechem by John Hyrcanus during the second century B.C. The Samaritan religion at the time of Jesus had become Mosaic and quasi-Sadducean, but strongly anti-Jewish.

Which one would show the wounded man, the best example of neighbourliness and how did he show it? As we know all too well, it was our eponymous hero, the Samaritan. He could have taken the man to the inn and left him without dressing his wounds, but he first made him comfortable, before he took him. That was not enough though, and he did to the man, what he would have done for himself. He would see him through recovery period and pay all expenses.

It has an echo of what Paul says concerning the Redeemer, *Rom 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Rom 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* The Samaritan was like Christ to the wounded man, and the opens another window for us to see Christ in the “good Samaritan”.

Christ takes us into care when we have been beaten up by the robbers and thieves of the devil. When we were incapable of helping ourselves, "*while we were yet sinners"*, Christ loved us and showed us Mercy. If the Samaritan showed mercy, he got the example from Christ, for in an evolutionary world, mercy has no meaning. Christ having bandaged our wounds, sets us in safety and continues to care for us, even though He goes to the Father, and "*when I come again, I will repay thee*".

The man who had been robbed was not helped by the Jewish religious professionals of his day, the Levites and the Priests, men who had no qualms about living off of the Israelites, of taking their tithes. But "mankind was their business", but they were merely concerned more about their religious duties than their fellow man. They both "passed by on the other side". The representatives of Judaism, the established church, did nothing for the wounded man, except look at him, but the Samaritan helped him, just as Christ helps us. You can either trust in religion, trust in the forms of Christianity or you can trust in Christ, and it is clear Who helps you the most.

I don't want to imply that you go out and help every soul that you meet regardless of whether they need it. That you give to people who are clearly using your kindness for their own ends. But you should seriously examine needs of people and where there is no help for them, put yourself out to them and meet their need, *Luk 6:34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. Luk 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Luk 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful*.

Finally, I observe that we are not told the nationality of the man who was robbed, his religious affiliation or anything about him. He could have been a Jew, going about his religious duties, coming down from Jerusalem, at perhaps a feast of Israel, and the Priest and the Levite, scurrying along from the same feast passed him by. He could have been a Roman, or a tax collector, somebody who would not have given the Samaritan the time of day in ordinary circumstances. He is your enemy, your worst adversary, the man who hates you and the person you do not want to help, but you do help because Christ is in you. The victim of the robbers is the man with no name, and it does not matter who he is, for it is not a story about him, but about the good Samaritan, the good neighbour.

Luk 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? Luk 10:37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, ***Go, and do thou likewise.***

90. The Martha's and the Mary's. *Luke 10:38 - 42*

Luk 10:38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. Luk 10:39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. Luk 10:40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. Luk 10:41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: Luk 10:42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Where is Jesus speaking from? It seems on the face of it, He is speaking from Bethany and yet in the same chapter of Luke 10, the disciples have just returned to Him, from presumably somewhere in Samaria, *Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him*.

According to other verses in Luke's account, we see Jesus has not yet approached Jerusalem, *Luk 17:11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of* ***Samaria and Galilee****. Luk 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: .....Luk 18:31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold,* ***we go up to Jerusalem****, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished*. (See our map in Luke volume 1, 2. Background, showing Jesus progress according to Luke).

It is only by Luke chapters 19 and 20 that we see Jesus approaching Bethany and Jerusalem, *Luk 18:35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto* ***Jericho****, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: .....Luk 19:28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. Luk 19:29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to* ***Bethphage and Bethany****, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, Luk 19:30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.*

The difficulty we have in dating the length of Jesus ministry from Luke's account is due to how the events are related. We saw in Luke chapter 7, the unity of the events recorded apparently in the Galilee region, with the events recorded in Bethany, but out of step according to the other Gospel writers. How come the stories take place at the same time in Luke when geographically they are separated by 100 or so miles? We suggested that Luke had brought the incident back in time and ignored the geography and timelines, just to illustrate "Wisdom being justified by her children". I think that the verses in our text are brought back in time to illustrate another point.

It might puzzle us why Luke said, *Luk 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,* when he does not write events in chronological order, "in order" as he claims. But good Dr Gill has an explanation, "which regards not so much the order of time, which he does not always strictly observe, as the particulars of things, related in order, and with great exactness".

The event before us is not placed in chronological order but the events are linked. The event is linked in Luke's mind with what has gone before. Bethany is on the road to Jericho. Did Luke recall another story from Jesus ministry at a similar place because they were connected?

Let us look at another translation of our story of Mary and Martha, *Luk 10:38 Now as they were travelling along, Jesus went into a village. A woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Luk 10:39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and kept listening to what he was saying. Luk 10:40 But Martha was worrying about all the things she had to do, so she came to him and asked, "Lord, you do care that my sister has left me to do the work all by myself, don't you? Then tell her to help me." Luk 10:41 The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha! You worry and fuss about a lot of things. Luk 10:42 But there's only one thing you need. Mary has chosen what is better, and it is not to be taken away from her."* ISV.

A few points to note here. "**They went**", that is the disciples went, and it was not just Jesus and the two women, but all the disciples as well, although the disciples do not contribute to the dialogue or it seems to helping Martha. It was **Martha's home** and all the more reason for the guests to show some consideration to poor Martha, and not just sit about waiting to be served, but to offer help, after all it was a big meal preparation. Have they no consideration for others? The word for "serving" is διακονέω = diakoneō, to minister, and in the context it implied more than preparing vegetables. I think Martha was frustrated

that this bunch of lazy disciples had come in waiting to be waited on hand, foot and finger.

There is also a point to make on the preceding story, the good Samaritan. The man was robbed going down to Jericho. Was it a parable or a true story, because it doesn't say "parable" in the text and it doesn't have a hidden meaning? Because it is written as a heading, "The parable of the good Samaritan", you don't have to accept it, because words, "the parable of the good Samaritan" are not scripture, it is not expired by God.

A parable has an spiritual and literal reading, so only the disciples of Christ understand both meanings, *Luk 8:9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? Luk 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand*. There is only one interpretation here and that is the obvious meaning that Jesus brings out. The Samaritan is the one who shows mercy and there no two ways you can read this.

The Levite and the Priest were scurrying about their important business, on the churches business, no time for the things of God, no time for mercy, but the Samaritan has time to serve others, and he gets the commendation. So we learn a lesson about serving others, or do we? This story of Mary and Martha, is where the story of the good Samaritan is tempered with reality, and so we switch to Martha's house.

She too is a "good Samaritan". She throws her doors open to the weary disciples, hospitality to the saints, she waits upon their needs, washes their feet, sets food before them and what thanks does she get, NONE. There is almost a rebuke from Jesus, *Luk 10:41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: Luk 10:42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* It is as if Jesus said to her, after all her hard work, *Luk 17:9 Servants don't deserve special thanks for doing what they are supposed to do. Luk 17:10 And that's how it should be with you. When you've done all you should, then say, "We are merely servants, and we have simply done our duty."* CEV.

There is a balance between good works, works of mercy and the neglecting of a more important thing, listening to Jesus. We are not to neglect the former, but we are to get our priorities right, or else we just become people who do good works and nothing else. A works based faith, an ambulance service for wounded travellers, the Samaritan Red Cross, until it becomes a humanitarian organisation not a Christian one.

Don’t rubbish Martha for her great kindness and hospitality, after all, what would have been the story if she had sat down at Jesus feet? Where would they have gotten their evening meal from, a home delivery takeaway or perhaps a miracle? I think not. There would have to have been a bit more of a joint effort.

The fact that Jesus does not mention any male disciples is interesting. They were clearly selfish as young men are, and they must have repeated this many times when they had meals together. Some listening to Jesus, some complaining that the others weren’t helping, and so surely, they could have illustrated this point?

But this is the point, it is the women Jesus focuses upon. He has made one point by showing them the value of sitting under His ministry, and the second point is what we might miss today. That Jesus regarded the sisters as being equally important listeners and disciples. We take this for granted today but with our Jewish 1st century outlook, this was nothing but revolutionary. The woman’s role is not in the home but is equal with the man when it comes to ministry. Mary of Bethany, who becomes Mary Magdalene, is the forerunner of emancipation for women.

Priority of tasks is the key. Mary gets them out of their suppressed role of “dogsbody” and concubine, and back to the role God intended for her. Yes, she does accept the created order, but that is her proud role under God, what she was created for, not trying to assume the role of the man that she cannot do. But she is intellectually man’s equal, spiritually man’s equal, ethnically on equal terms, and she is at one with discipleship, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*. That is what Jesus is illustrating here.

If you think about it, Martha is prolonging the role of the tired, down trodden woman, fitting the stereotypical role of the “hausfrau” perfectly, *Luk 10:41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: Luk 10:42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

In May of 1955, Housekeeping Monthly published an article entitled, "The Good Wife's Guide," detailing all the ways that a wife should act and how best she can be a partner to her husband and a mother to her children. It may feel a little strange to accept these rules today, but it remains so interesting to see how society once behaved.

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs.
- Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.
- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your makeup, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives. Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper, etc. and then run a dust cloth over the tables.
- Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.
- Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes.
- Children are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.

It is all man centred, so much so that you gave your wife a present of a food processor to keep her happy, poor thing, but in reality it was to make food for you.

The lesson Jesus gives is really to Martha, that the Martha's of this world must learn that there is a time to serve and a time to sit at Jesus feet. There is a time to do good and a time to sit and listen. There is also the time to break the superimposed role that would make a slave out of a woman, because a man thinks he has a right to certain things which God has not given to him.

Luke is a friend of the sisters. He has shown it before and he will show it again. He brings this scripture to our attention as with the others, to elevate women to

an equal role in discipleship. His radical reappraisal is a biblical eye opener and he must have received some criticism from those who wanted to keep the status quo. Here is emancipation for the woman.

91. How do we pray? *Luke 11:1 - 2*

Luk 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

We are now at the 11th Chapter of the book of Luke, and that according to him, is some way into Jesus ministry, and it is at this stage the disciples ask for some teaching on prayer. One wonders what they had been doing up to this point, and even whether they prayed at all. No one taught me any structured prayer when I came to the Lord, it seemed as if I should continue as I had started, giving a stumbling thank you to “Abba Father” for having saved me and struggling to speak to the infinite God of whom I knew practically nothing, hoping that He would excuse my ramblings until I could pray as He wished.

I wonder whether the disciples had a similar experience. After all, you need to know something about “God” before you can adequately address Him. A finite creature, limited in knowledge, limited in experience, needed to obtain some knowledge of God. Perhaps prayer can wait until you know who you are dealing with and immersing yourselves in scripture is not such a bad thing to do first off. John Sung, a Chinese Christian, was incarcerated for 193 days in an institution where he read the Bible from end to end 40 times. He devoted almost every waking hour to reading the Bible and prayer. Through those months, the Holy Spirit was carefully laying the foundations for John Sung's revival ministry. He was being prepared to participate in one of the mightiest revivals of the twentieth century.

Prayer is such a strange occupation, particularly as some of the things we pray and ask for do not get a vocal answer, and it appears we are speaking to someone who is not there. It appears to be the common experience of men that God is vocally silent in regard to our prayers before Him. You would think that some persons get a direct line to the Almighty, the way that they talk, “the Lord said this to me” or “the Lord told me to do such and such”. They are like the people talking down their mobile phones in the street. They have a special ear

piece and you can hear them gabbling but you cannot hear the reply. You only have their word that they got a reply, and maybe they did and maybe they did not.

But should you always get a reply, does God "talk" to us, and is praying more contemplative of self than asking God for things? As we go into this marvellous topic we shall hopefully answer these questions and raise others. Matthew lays out a bit more detail in his account of the "Lords prayer", *Mat 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. Mat 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Mat 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Mat 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

I do not think that the disciples never prayed as individuals, but they did not pray together, corporately, and this lays down some ground rules for corporate prayer as well as guidelines for individual prayer. It is firstly and foremost a conversation that you have with God. You do not have to make a show of it. Whether that be a show of forced eloquence mainly for those around you, or a falsely pious attitude for the sake of the observers, or that you have to dress in a particular way because that will make the prayer seem more genuine to those around you. If you pray to men like this, you have gotten man's answer and your reward from man. God did not figure in it in the least and so He does not hear it.

Prayer is to God alone, and when people pray they should be aware of this, even when it is a group of people praying, *Act 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. Act 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up* ***their voice to God with one accord****, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*: This prayer in Acts is a "999" call to God and it is a common request for assistance.

It raises the question of "Prayer meetings", and corporate prayer and how it is conducted. Should people meet together for the sake of airing there divergent prayers, their individual prayers, rather than meet as a body to pray for particular things for the common good? Should we meet corporately but as individuals, to pray individually with no common aim? After all, the Lord says "when you (plural)

pray", and not "when you (singular) pray". Does this mean the Lord's Prayer is about praying for corporate objectives?

Look at the number of plurals in the prayer, *Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, **Our** Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Luk 11:3 Give **us** day by day **our** daily bread. Luk 11:4 And forgive **us our** sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to **us**. And lead **us** not into temptation; but deliver **us** from evil*. It is quite clearly the Church at prayer not the individuals at prayer. It does not say, "**My** Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give **me** day by day **my** daily bread. And forgive **me my** sins; for **I** also forgive every one that is indebted to **me**. And lead **me** not into temptation; but deliver **me** from evil."

The Lord's Prayer is clearly corporate, not that we cannot pray for these things privately as well. But there is individual prayer, as set out in Matthew's Gospel, *Mat 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. Mat 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Mat 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

There is private prayer and there is corporate prayer, "Our Father", and I think it is good that we distinguish between the two types of prayer and that we approach each differently as it is important that we do so. But what is more important to us is the answer to prayer, after all, what is the point in praying if there is no answer?

Here it is that I observe another anomaly, *Luk 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. Luk 12:30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and **your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things**..... Mat 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your **Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him***. God knows your needs before you do, and so why am I praying for something God knows that I need? I doesn't seem to make any sense at all.

But then if I am looking at prayer as something akin to a penny arcade, or a food dispensing machine, I pray, God gives, He stocks the shelves in anticipation of my wants, and Bob's your uncle, all is well.

It is however rather frightening that God anticipates my needs. And what may I ask are my “needs” as opposed to “wants”? They are, *Luk 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. Luk 12:30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Luk 12:31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and* ***all these things shall be added unto you***.

It is in a manner of speaking, a gauge of faith. A gauge that has a pointer, which swings from green, good, to red, bad, depending on what you do. God is there to bless you if you are actively seeking the things of the Kingdom, with all that you need. If you are seeking the things of the world God will not bless you. It is very much like the Blessings and cursing’s of Deuteronomy chapter 27, *Deu 27:12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: Deu 27:13 And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali*.

Deu 27:14 And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, Deu 27:15 Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.....Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Deu 28:3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Deu 28:4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Deu 28:5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.

You can see there, the curses that follow disobedience, and they follow in a cascade of ruin. No amount of empty prayer can change a thing, if you will not listen to God’s voice. God’s voice does not come as an answer to prayer, it is already there with you, *Rom 10:8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; Rom 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Rom 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Rom 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*.

If the voice of God is not with you, you will not get what you ask by prayer. The voice of God is heard in the doing of God’s word, “*if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God*”, then shall the blessing fall and you will know that

God blesses you with the things you need. Because you have listened to the voice of your God, He adds the mundane things to you, *Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*.

So this type of prayer, for the things needful for life, "*give us today our daily bread*", needs some introspection. Why on earth would God dole out His providential supplies when we are blatantly ignoring "His voice" and not doing the things which He asks*, Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* I can pray a most eloquent prayer for bread, give my request on my knees and yet my heart is far from doing God's word. I want to hear His voice, the voice of God, in answer to my prayer, but I don't want to hear the voice of God in all His commands.

Because I start to think about prayer, I become introspective, examine myself first, I find that there is deep hypocrisy in my heart, things that need sorting out. Perhaps the prelude to prayer is a reading of scripture as George Müller discovered,

> I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.
>
> Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed myself in the morning. Now I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditate on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.

> I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.
>
> The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart.
>
> Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, either very soon after or at a later time, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

Meditation is the prelude to prayer. Think about what you are going to pray, whether it is right to pray for the things at all. Preparation is the key, after all you would carefully craft your speech for a ruler of this world, why do you not do it for the Almighty.

Next time I want to continue this subject with a look at the types of prayer, and suggest you give these verses your consideration, *1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all,* ***supplications, prayers, intercessions****, and* ***giving of thanks****, be made for all men; 1Ti 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1Ti 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;*

What are these four classes of prayer?

92. What do we pray? *Luk 11:1 - 2*

Luk 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

We have looked at "prayer" as a general concept, and particularly at prayer requests, in which we have seen that they have been divided into two categories, corporate and individual prayer. The answer to those prayers is more problematic, because prayer is bound up with the attitude of the suppliant, and disobedience to the word of God, personal disobedience nullifies prayer. If we will not hear God, why should God hear our prayer? The Scripture says, *Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.* ***The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*** *availeth much*. It is the prayer of the righteous man that prevails with God.

When prayer is seemingly answered, we take it that we are in favour with the Lord, we are in good standing with Him, we must be right with God, but is this so? We only have our interpretation of events to make that assumption that the prayer was answered. What if it was nothing to do with our prayer, what if it was someone else's prayer, what if it was coincidence that the outcome seemed like you had an answer to your prayer? Answers may be down to your interpretation of events, rather than any God given answer to prayer.

A big caveat to prayer is, "Why do you want the things you ask for?" Is it to advance the Kingdom of Heaven, is it to satisfy a need in you, say the conversion of a person for your sake, a gift from God to quieten your wants, anything that will conform the world to your will and pattern of doing things, **Beware**, *Jas 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*.

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew's version is slightly longer, *Mat 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Mat 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread. Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*.

Putting it slightly differently and changing it to make a point,

“My Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be my name. My kingdom come. My will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give me this day my daily bread. And forgive me my debts. And lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil”, is how some people practice the Lord’s Prayer. It is said all for their own benefit, to grant them all the blessing in life, without regard to anyone else, without thinking of anyone else. It is said without any deep thought about what is being said, it is a mantra, and just saying it is the benefit of it.

I do not see it like that. It is as we have said, a corporate prayer and we should be agreed upon the substance of it, how we as a body use it to focus our minds on the keys issues of the faith. For example, “Our Father in Heaven” is not just seeing God on a throne, a stationary figure, but seeing Him as a dynamic figure in all of His creative Glory, governing, decreeing, working in all the realms of science to bring to pass the Kingdom of His dear Son. It is a line that we all can meditate upon, a vast realm of praise we can call forth, and thanksgiving that He is even mindful of us men. We fall before Him and throw our crowns at His feet. This and much more is contained in that single line, “Our Father”. It should bring us to a deeper knowledge and consecration to Him.

Far from being a set prayer, a mantra that somebody just says, “let’s say the Lords prayer together”, as if saying it does anything, as if it is a magic spell, rather it is a subject list, a check list that you go through to think about your state and behaviour as a body with respect to your God.

- *Our Father in heaven,*
- *Holy be your name.*
- *Your kingdom come.*
- *Your will be done in earth,*
- *As it is in heaven*
- *Give us this day our daily bread*
- *Forgive us our debts,*
- *As we forgive our debtors.*
- *Put us not to the test,*
- *But deliver us from evil*
- *For yours is the kingdom,*
- *The power,*
- *The glory, for ever.*

That is something to meditate on before you pray, but have you ever considered that it is another form of the “Ten Commandments”.

- You shall have no other gods before Me.
- You shall not make idols.
- You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- Honour your father and your mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- You shall not covet.

I looked for some evidence that I might have been correct in my assumption and found this sermon on a “Harmony of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments”, Hugh Broughton (1549 - 1617).

Hugh Broughton delivered this sermon before Henry Prince of Wales on the 13th August 1603 on the matter of the Lord's Prayer. Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales KG (1594 – 1612), was the eldest son and heir apparent of James VI and I, King of England and Scotland; and his wife Anne of Denmark. Take note, age is no barrier to listening, since he was only 9 years old, and we pray it took hold because he died, sadly of Typhus aged just 18 years.

Broughton was subsequently moved to include a postscript to the printed sermon defending the text of the Lord's Prayer from an attack of Rome. The Pope claimed that his Latin Translation, which omitted the sentence, “***Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever***”, was to be preferred above the Greek manuscripts. As part of his defence of the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer Broughton gives warning that to deny this glorious sentence as part of the New Testament, is also to annul the harmony between that perfect form of prayer given by Christ to the Church and that perfect law of Christ summarised in the Ten Commandments. The harmony of the Lord's Prayer and Decalogue, the Ten Commands, the meditation of each will have profitable matter: but all must be considered together.

> God says: I am the Eternal thy God: Thou shalt have no other Elohim (God and judge) but me.
> We pray, O our Father: to thee only we pray and fly.

God says: Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing, &c.
We pray: Thou art in Heaven; in light that none can come to, nor think to what thou canst be likened.

God says: Thou shalt not take the name of the Eternal, thy God in vain.
We pray: Hallowed be thy Name.

God says: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day: as God's kingdom's badge.
We pray: Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.

God says: Honour thy Father and Mother, that it may be well with thee.
We pray: Give us; all estates, our competent nourishment.

God says: Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; Thou shalt not covet.
We pray: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us: and lead us not into hard trials, but deliver us from evil.

How the preface of the Decalogue, and end of the Prayer are to be viewed.

God says: I am the Eternal thy God; that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt: that was with great glory: and with the blood of the Lamb and overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; and terror of nations: and plague of Amalek, (that would fight against his Cousins in Izhak) and shaking of the earth, and flight of the Sea. Jeremiah tells, that the delivery from Babel, should be more glorious: and what persuaded 49,000 Jews to leave Babel, but the hope of Him, which should come with the *Clouds of Heaven, and have Kingdom, power and glory for ever*.

In the first year of Beleshzar they saw, that Bel, and Idols bred but fire and sorrow, and eternal rest was in the kingdom of Christ: and they knew when the kingdom should fall, and Cyrus deliver them, and all nations hear of their demanding of the way to Zion, upon the hope of the *Son of Man coming to show the Kingdom of Heaven to all nations: and to shake even the heaven of Moses policy*: so that hope turned to the world's salvation by Christ: wherefore that speech was worthy to be

in the Lord's Prayer, to light our hearts in Christ; without whom we have no right at all to say, Abba Father.

One of the verses in Scripture that shows us some types of prayer is, *1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, **supplications, prayers, intercessions**, and **giving of thanks**, be made for all men; 1Ti 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1Ti 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*;

Four types of prayer are given,

- supplications
- prayers
- intercessions
- thanks giving

- δέησις = deēsis a petition: - prayer, request, supplication.
- προσευχή = proseuchē prayer (worship)
- ἔντευξις = enteuxis an interview, that is, (specifically) supplication: - intercession, prayer
- εὐχαριστία = eucharistia gratitude; actually grateful language (to God, as an act of worship

What is the difference between these types of prayers, I leave it to you to decide. Even Trench in his “Synonyms of the Greek NT” shows that many of the scholars disagree among themselves, and I do not feel suitably qualified as a Greek scholar to advise you. But I observe this, and perhaps you will find it helpful, that there are a variety of prayers, because we do not just pray for one thing, but many things, and what we pray for and how we phrase our petitions, depends on what we are praying for. Look at the context, *1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, **be made for all men**; 1Ti 2:2 **For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty**. 1Ti 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 1Ti 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

It is a pretty big remit that we pray for. God says He *“will have all men to be saved”* and in view of the obvious fact that all men do not find Christ, I do not take this as a statement of His absolute will, but of His willingness to save men. God puts no barrier to Salvation, indeed He encourages us as His dear children to pray for these people in the world.

The outcome of that prayer should be "***that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty***". We are praying for others and at the same time praying for ourselves. It is doing what Jesus said, *Luk 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Luk 6:28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.* If they are good rulers and good men, give thanks for them, if they are bad, intercede for them, but never cut them out of your prayer.

And remember that your life is to be as much as is possible, "***quiet and peaceable***" and the qualities which you exhibit are "***godliness and honesty***". I just want to make this point by looking at the troubled world that we live in and in particular the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and to see what we should pray.

The Christian doesn't take sides, because he is looking down from the Kingdom of Jesus in Heaven. The two warring nations are sinners among the host of sinner nations, including Britain and America stoking the flames of conflict. We should not be partisan, but look objectively to the needs of both sides, "***for all men***", and though there may be different needs in the flesh, all have the need for the Saviour.

And what of the ***"kings, and for all that are in authority"***? There are rulers in Britain and America as well as rulers in Ukraine and Russia. There are rulers everywhere, with different ungodly agendas, who all have a hand in making this war. No wonder that there are so many types of prayer that can be made. But the question is, "What are you praying?" Do you really care what happens, or are you content to dwell in your small corner and leave well enough alone. Do you ever thinkabout your brethren in foreign countries?

The Churches may not be able, as local bodies, or as individuals to do much in the flesh. But one thing you can do is use the weapons God has given you in the fight against the principalities, *2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 2Co 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*;

One such weapon is prayer.

93. No other gods *Luke 11:2*

Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

This verse implies that there is more than one kingdom and we are to pray that God's kingdom will come and not the other kingdoms. In every generation, the people of God have looked for it. Abel offered by faith, Noah too condemned the world, Abraham did not put down roots, neither did his son's Isaac and Jacob, *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*.

There is the whole "cloud of witnesses", and these OT saints were looking for their home beyond this world, *Heb 11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. Heb 11:16* ***But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly****: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city…… Heb 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: Heb 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*.

I think if you had said to them, "Thy Kingdom come", they would have understood exactly what you meant. This prayer has as its "book ends" the Kingdom of Christ, *Mat 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven……Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:* ***For thine is the kingdom****, and the power, and the glory,* ***for ever****. Amen*. It is the everlasting Kingdom, the Kingdom Daniel the prophet saw, *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure*.

It is right to remind us "gentiles" of the Kingdom, which the Old Testament Saints had written into their very being, and this prayer does this, for I think it is written

mostly for us in the coming NT. In between those "book ends" there is written the character and dependence of the people who will be part of that Kingdom, "***Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil***".

It sounds like simple requirements, and it is, although they are in reality very difficult without the help of God. They are **not** something that can be taken up by any one, because there is a spiritual obstruction between God and man, *Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh* ***unto the Father****, but by me*. You are not God's sons and He is not your Father, until you have made that honest commitment to come through Jesus. You are just praying into the wind. It is an undirected prayer.

We have to thank modern evangelism and in particular, crusade evangelism, for the great confusion over this. "Crusade evangelism is a strategy that has been used since the First Great Awakening in mid-1700's. It began in England and American where popular preachers gathered together large crowds of people, and preached the Gospel to them. Some of the leading evangelists to use this strategy include D. L. Moody, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Finney, Billy Sunday, and in more recent years, Billy Graham, Franklin Graham, Luis Palau, and Greg Laurie." In his study on "**Is the Gospel Really Preached at Evangelism Crusades?"** Jeremy Myers says,

> The typical message at an Evangelistic Crusade follows this structure:
>
> *God loves you, but you are a sinner. As a sinner, you are alienated from God, and can do nothing to correct that alienation. If you continue in that state, you will suffer eternal alienation from God in everlasting hell. But God, out of His great love for us, created a way of escape from eternal punishment—you must be born again.*
>
> There is little agreement among evangelists about the method of being *born again*. The requirements often include raising a hand, coming forward, saying a prayer, signing a card, confessing Christ, repenting of sins, believing in Jesus, and getting baptized, which is altogether a separate issue……
>
> The message itself is not exactly wrong, it just leaves out a huge portion of the Gospel. The message is too otherworldly. It is a message about the afterlife only, about heaven and hell and what happens to us after we die. The message rarely has much application or relevance for

> life here on earth, unless it is some vague notion that God wants to help us with our needs if we will just pray, obey, and go to church. I understand that the evangelist can only say so much, and that the message of eternal life is the most vital, and that the ministries encourage local churches to do the follow-up discipleship.
>
> But this is exactly the problem. When a Crusade Evangelist gets all the glamour, glitz, and glory of presenting the "Gospel" to millions of people, and the people hear a message about being born again, and then those who respond attend a church without all the glamour, glitz, and glory, and they hear a message about discipleship, following Jesus, danger, famine, persecution, and suffering, they rightfully feel that somebody is not being honest. The requirements of discipleship are not what they signed up for. And so they abandon church in droves.
>
> The only way the church can combat this, of course, is to maintain the glamour, glitz, and glory of the crusade evangelists while at the same time, dumbing down the Gospel message and the requirements of discipleship. Many churches in recent decades have successfully accomplished this, which accounts for much of the rise of the modern megachurch movement.

The point is this, I think we have been mislead by their attempt to put a "smiling emoji" at the end of a grim message of the downfall of the sinner. We comfort them with a message that they are saved if they give their lives to Jesus. They go away from the evangelistic campaigns as "saved" people. But where did Jesus ever give such a message to a sinful man. It is not that evangelism is wrong, it is so necessary. What is wrong is what the men tell you about salvation, and it is not what Jesus said.

Jesus told men to go out and evangelise, making disciples, *Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make **disciples of all the nations**, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age.* Darby.

I cannot think for the life of me, why the AV chose to leave out "disciples" and put in "teach*", Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* Not one word about discipleship.

In that simple mistake, in one version of the bible, lies the fate of multitudes of people. It is not just in teaching, by the acquisition of knowledge, that one becomes saved, it is in discipleship, and following Jesus to the end, that gives salvation. Until you die, you may have the “hope of Salvation” which is translated into salvation at the end of life, *Mat 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that* ***endureth to the end shall be saved***.

The verses in Matthew chapter 28 are to the Apostles, to either give an instruction to “teach all men” or “disciple all men”. Instructing people is necessary but discipleship is more important, because it is ongoing. Even the Apostles do not complete their discipleship, they are ever servants and followers of the Master, as Jesus said, *Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things* ***whatsoever I have commanded you*****:** Paul the apostle, *1Co 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 1Co 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but* ***God that giveth the increase***.

We are all of us, under God, disciples, *Luk 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master*. Discipleship is learning, teaching is putting out and therein is the difference. The disciple learns and continues to learn about the master. The teacher thinks he knows what the Lord wants but the disciple follows the Lord, and that does not require a teacher, *1Jn 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you,* ***ye shall abide in him***.

The man who is told he is saved by an evangelist or any person, has been told he is in a relationship with God. For him, salvation is complete because he has been told, wrongly, that he **IS** saved and apart from joining a church there is no urgency about Christianity. Discipleship is not a priority, except for a six week course on discipleship, just to make sure you have covered it. I pointed out already the low state of discipleship, in an article on “Christian Discipleship for Dummies”, by Dan Dick,

> I was talking with a pastor who proudly stated that his church was getting serious about discipleship. This a church of approximately 300

> members. He told me that five people (all retired women) are covenanting together to "follow Steve Manskar's *Accountable Discipleship* book," and *meet once a quarter for 90 minutes* to model discipleship for the rest of the congregation. I responded, "you mean weekly, don't you?" He explained that, no, when they all looked at their calendars, they couldn't commit to more than once every three months, and even then not everyone would be able to attend every meeting.

I think that in Matthew 28 we see that it is discipleship that is important and that is not a three monthly study, or a weekly study either, it is a life style. You are a disciple from when you wake until you fall asleep, and even in your dreams you are a disciple. You eat and sleep discipleship, you meet with likeminded people, intent on knowing Jesus as Lord, because they are disciples too, not with those poor pew fodder of the churches who only go on Sundays and live their own selfish lives for the rest of the week. Discipleship is your calling and will lead to salvation.

Ken Braddy gave the difference between a teacher and a disciple,

1. **A teacher shares information, while a discipler shares life**. .
2. **A teacher aims for the head, while a discipler aims for the heart**.
3. **A teacher measures knowledge, while a discipler measures faith**.
4. **A teacher is an authority, a discipler is a servant**.
5. **A teacher says, "Listen to me" while a discipler says, "Follow me."**

Peter sees salvation as an outcome of faith, *1Pe 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 1Pe 1:9* ***Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls****.* Paul puts it as a hope, *1Th 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet,* ***the hope of salvation****. 1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 1Th 5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him*.

How can evangelists today say that you are saved? You get right with God, and you **shall be saved**, not **ARE** saved, *Rom 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled****, we shall be saved by his life****. Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement*.

94. The core of the prayer *Luke 11:2 - 4*

Luk 11:2 ..... Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Luk 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread. Luk 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

We turn from the "book ends" of the Lord's Prayer, the Kingdom, to look at what they support, the substance that is held between the pillars of the Kingdom. The disciples wanted to know what to pray, here it is, the things which should really matter to the disciple, according to the Lord. Not healing, not riches, not fame, not success, not a long life, not a peaceful end, these do not figure in Christ's encouragement to prayer.

This prayer shapes us as citizens of His Kingdom, and we should not be concerned for these things of earthly life, *Luk 12:28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? Luk 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. Luk 12:30* ***For all these things do the nations of the world seek after****: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Luk 12:31 But rather* ***seek ye the kingdom of God****; and all these things shall be added unto you. Luk 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*.

These are the blessing that flow from God, but in the evolutionary world where everything comes about from blind chance, there can be no blessings, no certainty, no Creator who cares for His Creation. There can be no meaning in a universe that is governed by chance, for every moment that comes to pass cannot be predicted, only random change rules. Yet men rely on the God of order to give them a universe that is predictable, meanwhile denying the very Creator. Science relies on there being a God whilst denying Him in practice.

This prayer cries to God as the agent of truth and sustenance. We view this Lord's Prayer as meeting our earthly needs but I think it goes much deeper than that. If it were all about earthly needs and Christ ministering to us in this life, we should be miserable men, as Paul says, *1Co 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*. It is much more than this life, it is eternal life. The Lord's Prayer is about our "forever" life in Christ.

I am sure that when all our striving has ceased, when all our self importance is finished, when all our vanity has gone the way of all flesh, when the people we argued against fall silent in the grave, when all jealousies cease and our fleshly lust are quelled, we shall see, standing high above it all one person, Jesus the Christ. All that we ever did counts for nothing in eternity, if it was not done for Christ. He is the one above all that we should serve and He disciples us to that point of service.

The prayer cries for more of HIM and less of us. "*Thy will be done"* sums up the mind of the disciple, it appeals to God for the grace to bring every thought in subjection to Him, *2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity* ***every thought*** *to the obedience of Christ*; I am not my own, I am a servant, blood bought by Him, and my greatest compliment to the Master is to think His thoughts after Him.

I note that "**my**" thoughts count for nothing and that every one of "my" thoughts must be examined, and brought into captivity, brought into conformity to His thoughts. His kingdom will come, with me or without me, but I will not be a part of it without His thoughts, without conformity to His thoughts.

We pray this part of the Lord's Prayer as if it is a foregone conclusion that we will be doing His will, that we will be an obedient people, obedient disciples. We just say this prayer out of habit, thinking that this prayer will come about passively, even if we do nothing. That is wrong because we must seek to be actively obedient. We say "thy kingdom come", as if it is an inevitability for us, all the time unconscious of "our will's" contradicting His will, *Luk 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

The prayer brings to our consciousness the battlefield of the will. It is in heaven and it is on earth, *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Are we in heavens army, or are we so blinkered that we only see the problems on earth? It is a cosmic battleground, and whose side are you on when you are not doing what Christ says? You show your allegiance to the world by not obeying Christ.

Likewise in the petition, *"Give us day by day our daily bread",* we show our allegiance to Christ. How so? Bread is not grain, not just food of all kind, not just life, but Christ is, *Joh 6:32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. Joh 6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down*

from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Joh 6:34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Joh 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: ***he that cometh to me shall never hunger****; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst*.

You can pray all you like for daily bread, the bread that will perish, the bread of the day, and hardly give a thought for your soul. Like the manna in the wilderness it will breed worms and stink after a short time. But Christ, the bread of life never ever comes to corruption, *Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*. This brings us to a deeper consideration of what truly nourishes us, what bread do you think we need? I think the hymn writer William Hammond (1719-1783) had this in mind when he wrote,

All unholy and unclean,
I am nothing but sin;
On thy mercy I rely;
Give me Christ, or else I die.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeSJL9YrwHU

The Lord's Prayer has so far given to us "Christ the food", and now it gives us "Christ the forgiver". How can any man be forgiven unless Christ die for him? How can any mortal man forgive except he is forgiven first, for he must be washed of his sin or else he is sinner, and how can a sinner forgive a sinner? He must know forgiveness first, the depths of sin an how much it cost to set him free before he can forgive others, and the plea "*forgive us our sins?"* must be first be a question, to ask the Lord how have I sinned against you? *Luk 6:41 You can see the speck in your friend's eye. But you don't notice the log in your own eye. Luk 6:42 How can you say, "My friend, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you don't see the log in your own eye? You show-offs! First, get the log out of your own eye. Then you can see how to take the speck out of your friend's eye.* CEV.

It is something man seldom enquires about; he is only interested in the forgiveness, being forgiven. He is not concerned about the particulars of his sin, only that he is forgiven. He is not concerned that he was a rebel that he worked against God, that he lacked common decency and had all the qualities of a dog, except loyalty. That he was a blasphemer, disloyal, a thief, a murderer in thought if not in deed, he rejoiced in the adultery of his mind, he rejoiced in his sin. That his mind was full of filth, dirty jokes, mockery of God did not concern him. And "when" he finds forgiveness, is that all he can say, "*forgive us our sins".*

Perhaps that attitude to sin, as being trivial, is at the heart of the sinner failing to forgive others, but the sinner who will not forgive has the problem. He is trying to extort an apology from somebody before he will forgive, irrespective of the guilt or innocence of the person accused. The person who holds a grudge will never be forgiven, because they have a hard unforgiving heart. The verse says, *"forgive us our sins; **for we also forgive every one** that is indebted to us"*. Darby translates it, "*remit us our sins, for we also remit to every one indebted to us*".

It is saying that we forgive in exactly the same way in which we are forgiven. "***As we also forgive***". If we do not forgive properly we shall get the same level of forgiveness from Christ. The person who doesn't forgive under any circumstance, has not felt the weight of their own sin. They wallow in self-pity as in a bath of sewage of their own making.

How does Christ forgive? Does He say to you, "If you want my forgiveness, you have got to apologise for each and every sin that you have committed?" You would never remember all of your sins, so how could you apologise? Christ forgives His enemies, *Rom 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Rom 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. Rom 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

In view of our crimes it is the height of hypocrisy that we should demand anyone's forgiveness. That we should be so high minded to think that we are better than others, more righteous, worth more than any one else, but that is the position we take, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican***.** We have discovered the hard hearted Pharisee in us if we do not forgive others.

This verse on forgiveness really does want thinking about, because your eternal life depends on it, *Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses*. It is not just saying sorry, mere words. It is saying it from the bottom of my heart I forgive you, and that heart can only be seen by God.

The next part of the Lord's Prayer is very interesting, "*lead us not into temptation".* The word for "temptation" comes from πειρασμός = peirasmos which means a putting to proof. James makes it clear, *Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Jas 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: Jas 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*. It is not God directly tempting you, but He leads you away from temptation.

I am reminded of Job, who was tempted, *Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. Job 1:12* ***And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand****. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD*.

The Lord did not touch Job and it was by permission that satan touched him, for he could not have touched him without permission. Is this what we are to pray against, the trials of satan? *Jas 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* ***Jas 5:11*** *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that* ***the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy***.

Sin does more, it assails the sensory organs, and we are better off without them if they tempt us, as the Lord said, *Mat 18:7 The world is in for trouble because of the way it causes people to sin. There will always be something to cause people to sin, but anyone who does this will be in for trouble. Mat 18:8 If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! You would be better off to go into life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the fire that never goes out. Mat 18:9 If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out and get rid of it. You would be better off to go into life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell*.

Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? For we are weak and sinful, *Job 5:7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the*

sparks fly upward. Every second of every day we are taken captive by sin and it is only the power of Christ who overcame sin, who can work deliverance for us. *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25* ***I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord****.*

In the Lord's Prayer, we have three statements as to who Christ is, "Christ the food", "Christ the forgiver" and "Christ the deliverer". There is of course much more that I could say but I leave that to you to study.

Two final thoughts on this prayer. Firstly we should get ready to pray. We do not rush in to corporate prayer, we give some time to getting prepared, *Act 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. Act 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord*……They have a unity of purpose in their prayer. It is not a series of individual prayers because you can do those in your locked closet.

Secondly, there is thanks giving for prayers answered. Common courtesy demands it. *Luk 17:17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Luk 17:18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. Luk 17:19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole*. It says more than that, for it literally says, "thy faith has saved thee".

Who do you think of the ten lepers, was the one looking to Jesus? Which of them would say, "**Give me Christ or else I die**".

95. Friends Luke 11:5 - 8

Luk 11:5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; Luk 11:6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? Luk 11:7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. Luk 11:8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

There is a similar story given in the 18th chapter of Luke, *Luk 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Luk 18:2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: Luk 18:3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. Luk 18:4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Luk 18:5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. Luk 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. Luk 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? Luk 18:8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth*?

I think these verses are given to encourage us to pray and to pray beyond the Lord's Prayer, for anything which concerns us, but first we should see if our issues are the same as the Lord's. We bear in mind that Christ is the centre of our prayer and that it is in Jesus Name that we ask, *Joh 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. Joh 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Joh 14:14* ***If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it****.*

It is not a blank cheque book, a carte blanche, saying, "I promise to pay the bearer on demand", the sum of ALL his prayers, anything and everything that he wants. We do not see all prayers answered and we must conclude that God had other ideas about our requests, and that it was not according to His will, *1Jn 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that,* ***if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us****: 1Jn 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*.

Prayers in His Name, "***If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it***", certainly get answered but not the others that are not in His Name. What does it mean to pray in Jesus name? It has come to be the doxology of a prayer, the thing which we all say at the end of prayers asking God's blessing on our prayer because we ask in "Jesus Name". It has become customary to say it after every prayer, irrespective of the knowledge of God's will for the thing asked or. It is said more in hope than in faith, because we do not really know God's will.

Peter uses the Name of Jesus, to heal the lame man, and makes it quite clear he personally did not have the power to do it, but Jesus did, *Act 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have bright hand, and lifted him up:*

and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength……. Act 3:16 And ***his name through faith in his name*** *hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.* It clearly means, “with the authority of Jesus”.

If we think that we can ask for anything in His Name, let us take note of what may happen, *Act 19:13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits* ***the name of the Lord Jesus****, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. Act 19:14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. Act 19:15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? Act 19:16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.* They used the “Name of Jesus” to no avail. Why? Well they were not Christians and they had not been given authority to act in the “Name of Jesus”.

It seems to me that we often take the lead away from Jesus rather than follow Him, we seek to do our will not His and we do not give thanks for prayers answered. I think that it would be a good idea to write down our requests, our prayers, write down whether Christ has given us any indication that it is His will, note the fulfilment of the prayer and whether we gave thanks for any answers.

We pray as if we were governing the universe without God. We have our plans and they are what counts, and we never find out what God’s plan is, what He is doing, where He is going. Consequently we often may find that we are praying in opposition to Him, for example the prayer of James and John to sit on Jesus right and left hand in the glory. It was a prayer request to Jesus, *Mar 10:37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. Mar 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with*?

On another occasion, the disciples had the purpose of God wrong, and Jesus had to rebuke them, *Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village*. If only they had considered the matter, they might not have acted so precipitously.

The Lord watched while Adam named the animals, but He did not intervene in the choice of names, *Gen 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see*

what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. God could do it all and make all of the choices, but some He leaves to us, and He leaves their consequences to us as well. Because He lets you do it, does not mean you are right in your decision.

Again we are confronted with "our" ideas or Christ's plan. What I consider the truth of the matter or what Christ's truth is. Whether I am running ahead of Him or following Him. There is so much we would want Him to do and surely it cannot be all wrong. My wanting to see my family saved, my desire for the Gospel to be preached to my neighbours, for sick people to be healed are surely not going beyond the compassion of Christ are they?

Compassionate they may be, or they may be compassionately selfish, or genuine prayers but lacking the commitment from us. I want my family saved because the prospect of hell is too terrible to contemplate, but I am not committed to see Christ formed in them, following Him. The same goes for my neighbours, I want them evangelised so that they come to our meeting and join with us, not that they find Christ as a personal Saviour. I want to see people healed, so that they lead a pain free life, not that they might glorify the Christ. My motivation is all wrong and I have not asked the question, "Why do I really want these things?"

Do we pray because we are in no fit state to see these things come about because of our behaviour? Do we pray to make up for the deficiencies in us? Our Christian witness is so poor, lacking knowledge, lacking obedience that this prayer is to make up for our short comings. My friend, what are you doing about it?

The state of Christianity may be summed up thus. Little bands of Calvinists, little bands of Arminians, little bands of Reconstructionists, little bands of Anglicans, little bands of Baptists, little bands of Catholics and so on, all trying to put their brand of faith across, selling their goods in the market of life, all shaping me into their image and discounting everyone else. Leading men rather than following Christ. Why does it not occur to them, *Exo 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Exo 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. **Thou shalt have no other Saviour than me, thou shalt have no other Christ but me.**

Let us go a little deeper into this subject of God's will and see if it really is a carte blanche, "ask and you shall receive". I want to take just one subject of prayer, "healing", to make a few points. We seldom think of God's will in respect to this subject, only our own will, and the first thing that we do is ask Him to heal the person. We do not ask the Lord why the person is sick or what the person is being

taught by the sickness, only that they should be healed. The sickness may be self inflicted, for a number of different reasons and the victim must suffer his folly. The person may have the sickness because of God's Glory, to manifest His grace and long suffering to the individual, or the sickness may be due to some sin which is not recognised.

I have told you the story, that when I was at senior school, in an art class, that I helped a boy who was red/green colour blind, to mix his colour palette. I thought I was being helpful. The art master was furious with me, yes, he had a go at me, and I was quite taken aback by his attitude. I hadn't realised that the art master was trying to get the boy to learn the colours of skin, for example, by observing their "tone", and mix the colours from this observation, not have it done for him. I had pushed in, not realising that the art master was teaching the boy a lesson. That is how many of our interventions must seem to the Lord, we intervene not knowing that He is teaching a lesson to someone through the experiences they suffer, *Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; Heb 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*; Even Jesus could not avoid suffering to learn, and if He had to, then so do we, and praying will not get us out of the pain or short circuit the process.

Imagine that you were back in Jesus day, and in the town where that poor woman lived, who had a "spirit of infirmity", you might have been praying in vain for her recovery for years because it was not to be until Jesus came along that she should be healed, *Luk 13:15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? Luk 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day*? The healing was a loosening of satan's grip on her, in God's time.

I cannot imagine what suffering she went through, like the woman with the "issue of blood", a social outcast, people avoiding her, *Luk 8:43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Luk 8:44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched*. These women must have spent so much of that time in their isolation wondering what is God doing to me? They had a long time of introspection. What lesson was God teaching them?

Did God really love them, care for them, because He does not answer them in their hour of distress, not for many years? The must have lain awake thinking

what evil persons they were and wondering what enormous crime they had committed to make this happen. After all, wasn't health one of the signs of God's blessings to Israel? *Exo 15:26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee*.

> Often, Christians have an over-simplified idea of healing. They think that, if they are sick, they have only to ask God to heal them and, because God loves them, He will heal them straightaway. Healing is seen as proof of a person's faith and of God's love. This idea persists in some circles in spite of the truth that every mother knows: a parent does not give her child everything he asks for every time, no matter how much she loves him.
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> Joni Eareckson Tada struggled with this issue for a long time. As she recounts in her book, Joni, she sought physical healing of her quadriplegia. She prayed and fully believed that God would heal her. In her words, "I certainly believed. I was calling up my girlfriends saying, 'Next time you see me I'm going to be running up your sidewalk. God's going to heal me'". Yet Joni is still in a wheelchair today. Forty-five years after the accident that left her paralyzed, God has still not healed her. Her perspective is one of great faith: "God may remove your suffering, and that will be great cause for praise. But if not, He will use it, He will use anything and everything that stands in the way of His fellowship with you. So let God mould you and make you, transform you from glory to glory. That's the deeper healing". Some feel that God will never heal anyone miraculously today. Others feel that God will always heal a person if he or she has enough faith. But God will not be put into either box.

It is the Lord that heals you, not you or some man-made prayer. It is Christ the Lord and it is for His glory and in His time. The crowds that came to Jesus, all recognised His power to heal and that is why they came to Him. They were all instantly healed as a demonstration of His power but God will not be put in a box. The genie, who delivers the goods when you ask, is just not there, and like poor Harvey, the man with cerebral palsy, they did not get an answer.

What I have shown in this illustration of healing, is true of many other areas where the prayer is not answered. We might conclude that we have asked amiss, *1Jn 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that,* ***if we ask any***

***thing according to his will**, he heareth us: 1Jn 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*.

Or it might be a totally wrong view of the story Jesus is telling us.

96. The greatest gift *Luke 11:5 - 13*

*Luk 11:5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; Luk 11:6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? Luk 11:7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. Luk 11:8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. Luk 11:9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Luk 11:10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Luk 11:11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Luk 11:12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? Luk 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him**?*

Picking up the different threads of the story we can get an overview of what Jesus is talking about. We had the Lord's Prayer, which at a deeper level pointed to Christ's sovereignty, and we have three statements as to who Christ is, "Christ the food", "Christ the forgiver" and "Christ the deliverer". Then we have what is an amazing statement, "*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you".* This was not as open ended a prayer, a carte blanche, for as we saw and there were numerous caveats to it.

Why should we be asking for life's necessities anyway, when God already knows what our needs are? This runs counter to the teaching, *Mat 6:31 Therefore **take no thought**, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33*

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*. Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* I don't have to ask for anything as long as I am pursuing His kingdom, and the other things will fall into place in my life automatically.

I should not be as the "gentiles", troubled where the next meal is coming from. Anxiety should not overwhelm me as the others who do not know the Lord, *Luk 12:22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. Luk 12:23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Luk 12:24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? Luk 12:25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? Luk 12:26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Luk 12:27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Luk 12:28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? Luk 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. Luk 12:30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Luk 12:31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Luk 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*.

We saw that far from being a call to grant us anything we wanted, our requests are modified by other Scriptures, *1Jn 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that,* ***if we ask any thing according to his will****, he heareth us:* We might have our prayers answered, if we asked according to His will. But this seems to run counter to what Jesus is saying or are we missing something?

Taking a closer look at the story of the friend who comes to beg bread at an unearthly hour and gets what he wants because of his importunity, we find out that it is not about "what we get" but about "how we ask" that counts. You will notice that the man doesn't ask bread for **himself**, he is asking for a friend. This is not about getting something for self but for others.

It is saying that if you are going to ask God, who is the Friend, for something on behalf of someone, then be a man, spit out your request with boldness, do not be apologetic, and make sure you see the request through. *1Ti 2:8 I will therefore*

that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. .....Jas 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Jas 1:7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

Prayer is not undertaken lightly or trivially. It is given with full vigour, not half heartedly, not with timidity. Prayer like the Kingdom is seized with both hands, *Mat 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,* ***and the violent take it by force****.* I must confess that most of the "Christianity" or what passes for it, has in my generation had the appearance of a genteel ladies tea party, trying hard not to offend anyone, and not making statements that will offend or be controversial. There is none of that raw feeling among the people of the faith which so seizes the soul, that it borders on violence.

People are not taken with the Gospel in the same way today as they were two hundred years ago. They are not smitten by it, they are not persuaded of it, they languish between two opinions, not knowing what to do, like the Laodicean's, they are neither hot nor cold. They certainly do no clamber over one another to get their place in the Kingdom of Heaven, and take it violently, which they should, *Mat 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*.

I have no doubt in my mind that it is the mistrust that has been engendered by the army of charlatans, going around, knocking on doors, seeking to get the ignorant and foolish people to sign up to a system of religion, which makes man a two fold child of hell, that has caused this. The Gospel is no longer in plain view to man, it is twisted, nuanced, dressed up until it is barely recognisable. It is not the robust Christianity of the Bible that we see in Jesus day but a pale shadow of it, a wet version of the reality of discipleship. If we are going to seize the Kingdom by violence, then our conversations around it, our prayers, must be equally strong, vigorous and no nonsense.

In my own experience, which I do not give as authority, I observe that when I cry out, when I am seized with the thing I am praying for, consumed by it, then I do pray with boldness and with urgency. It is then that I am more likely to get the answer to prayer. Most times I do not have that intent or urgency and in consequence, my prayers, which are just empty words, get no answers. That is as far as requests go.

I wonder how many of my other requests go unanswered, because they too are just empty words? Like the prayers for those people who are engaged in God's

work, *2Th 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2Th 3:2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith*. And what about praying for the sick, *Jas 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: Jas 5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. These prayers are half-hearted in the light of the obvious consequences.

The consequences of our prayers are that we have to stand out in the crowd and be counted as Christians. We have to take the consequences of a true profession of faith, but we do not want the consequences. We do not want the persecution, the isolation, as the writer of Hebrews says, *Heb 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; Heb 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Heb 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise*:

Do we ever think of those consequences or just shelve them in our minds? And because we have done our religious duty, like the Pharisee who “prayed to himself”, and we are off back in the world, doing the things we like to do. No, we don’t mind. The devil is very pleased when we are in this state, because he doesn’t have anything to do.

Is the lack of intensity of our prayers because we are afraid of the consequences of our prayers? Ernest Luff, who I mentioned in our book on “Jesus the Healer”, was certainly surprised when his prayer was answered,

> He was welcomed at the door by Emma’s mother, and asked how she was. Mrs. Smith told him that she was free of pain for the moment, if he would like to go up. Ernest went and found Emma, her face quite grey with the pain she had recently endured. “Emma,” he said, “I have something to tell you.” “What’s that?” she said. “You’re going to walk again,” he said. “I know I am,” she said, “I shall walk the golden streets one day.”

> “You're going to walk down here,” he said. He doesn't know what made him say it, but a sudden conviction came to him. He knelt by the bed and prayed, quoting Psalm 86 to her: “Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily”.
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> Emma listened closely as he went on praying: “Give ear, O Lord, unto my supplication and attend to the voice of my supplications. In my trouble I will call upon Thee, for Thou wilt answer, for Thou art great and doest wondrous things. Thou art God alone. Show me a token for good that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed, because Thou, Lord, hast helped me and comforted me.”
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> Then, raising his hands almost without his own volition, Ernest said: “Christ Jesus make thee whole.” Emma listened and three times said distinctively: “I do believe, I do believe, I do believe,” and as she said those final words she did something she had not done for many, many years. Her crooked back became straight and she sat up in bed.
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> I would like to be able to relate that Ernest Luff was not surprised, but with calm dignity called her parents and demonstrated to them the wonderful miracle that God had performed, but this is a true story of fact. When Emma sat up in bed, Ernest was so astonished and frightened that he turned tail, ran out of the room, down the stairs, up the street, and didn’t stop until, panting and breathless, he reached the house and confronted his surprised employer. Captain Moreton asked him what had happened, but all Ernest could say was: “Don’t ask me. Don't ask me now. I'll tell you some other time. Something’s happened, but don't ask me”.”

Luff was a good Christian, who prayed, but was taken aback that his prayer was answered, even though he had “a word” or some such revelation that the woman would be healed. If he couldn’t believe for what he prayed for, do we really believe what we pray for?

But the relationship that we have with our Heavenly Father is one where He encourages us to pray, and be specific about what we want. I note that Ernest Luff’s prayer was not for himself, and the Christian should be more concerned for other people, never the less, personal prayers are answered, *Luk 11:11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask*

a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Luk 11:12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

There is one more thing that Jesus says, which is generally overlooked and has to be asked for, *Luk 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him**?* It is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit was given in a specific outpouring on the day of Pentecost, *Act 2:1 And in the day of the Pentecost being fulfilled, they were all with one accord at the same place, Act 2:2 and there came suddenly out of the heaven a sound as of a bearing violent breath, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, Act 2:3 and there appeared to them divided tongues, as it were of fire; it sat also upon each one of them, Act 2:4 and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, according as the Spirit was giving them to declare*.

Why do we have to ask for what is given? *Joh 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

There is a difference between the giving of the Holy Spirit as a unifying sign among Christians, as it was at Pentecost and other occasions, such as in Samaria, *Act 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Act 8:15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: Act 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)* The “Pentecostal” gift is totally different for the general giving of the Spirit.

Simon Magus thought he could buy the power of the Apostles to distribute this “Pentecostal” gift himself*, Act 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Act 8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. Act 8:20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Act 8:21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Act 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*.

But that is only one aspect of the giving of the Spirit. There is another which I think Luke is referring to, *Heb 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with*

signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and ***gifts of the Holy Ghost****, according to his own will?* Notice that gift**S** is plural.

1Co 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1Co 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 1Co 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 1Co 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 1Co 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

I think that Luke is talking about the gifts of God, and in the context of asking and getting, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are far more important than bread, fish and eggs. We should ask for this, The Holy Spirit.

97. A Kingdom divided *Luke 11:14 - 17*

Luk 11:14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. Luk 11:15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. Luk 11:16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. Luk 11:17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

It just so happened that Jesus was casting out a demon, as you do, and when He had completed the task, the man could speak again, suggesting that the evil spirit had gripped his vocal cords and the man could not talk. Their were numerous instances of demonisation, or demon control over the normal abilities of man, so that a man could not function properly*, Mat 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Mat 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David*?

This strange phenomenon was also a relatively new phenomenon. We have to look hard for it in the OT, and it appears to be less of a phenomenon in the time after Jesus ascended. In the first recorded account of the devil, we see our forefathers arguing with him about the veracity of God's word and subsequently siding with him, which led to the fall of mankind. The creature was satan, *Rev*

*12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, **that old serpent**, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night*.

The devil did not enter Adam and Eve to make them sin, they were not demonized, as were the Gadarene swine herds. The devil stood before them and not in them, and by deceit and lies caused them to sin. This I think, was given, so that man could not be shown to be the innocent victim of sin, acting out of character, sleepwalking into evil. Man knew exactly what he was doing, and if you will, it was a league with the devil, *1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.* Mankind would appear to have become the devils seed, in virtue of the fact the God gave him over to his evil thoughts, *Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

The fall of man was no less precipitous than the fall of satan. It was occasioned by questioning God, by thinking that God Almighty was wrong in His ideas and that a puny man was right in his. From that day forward, the devil and man have propagated the most awful lies in pursuit of their aim of suppressing the truth of God, *Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Rom 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*.

There was an enmity that sprang up between demons and man as a result of the fall, but it did not stop their joint evil efforts against the Lord, *Gen 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*. It was I suppose an uneasy truce that had more to do with the coming Messiah than mankind and the devil.

Mankind did not need demon possession to assist the devil's wicked work. It is not as if there was a spark of good in man, an appealing to God, crying out for help. Mankind set about evil with a will, to undo everything that God did, and he had the satanic hordes to help him. It grew so bad that God came to the point of finishing mankind, *Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. Gen 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. Gen 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*.

The activity of demonic entities is hardly recorded in the OT. The Israelites were warned about offering blood to demons, *Lev 17:7 And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations*, but little else is said on the matter. Perhaps because the word = שָׂעִיר śâʿîyr means a he goat; the association was made between a goat and the devil, and he was portrayed as such.

The Canaanites had a god they called Baalzebub who lived if a Philistine town of Ekron, *2Ki 1:2 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. 2Ki 1:3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?* Apart from those brief details not much is known about them Biblically, perhaps to avoid undue attention to them.

The power of the demon is shown in the life of King Saul, the first king of Israel. That God should showcase the first king and his open disobedience in Israel, also reflected the national disobedience to the Almighty, *1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

Saul was plunged into darkness and demon oppression, *1Sa 16:14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled*

him. 1Sa 16:15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 1Sa 16:16 Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

His sad life culminated in the silence of God and the resort to the witch at Endor for enlightenment, where again the long dead prophet Samuel appears before him to tell him the future. Saul had tried to make amends by getting rid of evil in the land, *1Sa 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.* But it was too late.

Saul summons Samuel and gets the fearsome message that he would die tomorrow, *1Sa 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 1Sa 28:16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? 1Sa 28:17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: 1Sa 28:18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 1Sa 28:19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. 1Sa 28:20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night*.

I feel very sorry for Saul. He was a reluctant king, and chosen for no other reason than that he was taller than other men, *1Sa 9:2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.* Israel didn't have to start with a failure, David could have been chosen first, but God chose Saul and the time of the Kings began in failure.

Although the devil was present in the OT, he was working his evil in quietness. It must have seemed like the kingdom of Israel was divided, with in fighting,

intrigue, evil, and on the face of it they were not much different to the nations around them. But it was satan doing his subtle work.

Surprisingly not much can be said about the devil and his works. When we look into his operations we seldom have a clear view of what he is doing. Just when we think that we see what he is up to, he disappears and leaves us with a certain amount of confusion. In the case of the devil versus Job, we think that we see how satan works, but we are left with many unanswered questions. Why does God even speak to this wretched creature, why doesn't He punish him for his evil ways as he acts out evil, after all He punishes man? Where is satan at the end of this story, why is the conclusion left open as far as evil is concerned? Yes, Job gets restored, but the devil does not get punished and he is free to continue on his evil way.

Further, when you think about it, the devil does not have to "demonize" people to get them to obey him, because they are already cast into his camp. The whole of humanity, apart from a remnant, is in thrall to him. The conflict is between God's elect, that is the remnant, and the devils seed. This fight is brought to our attention by Jesus. Nowhere else in Earth's history is the power of the devil brought into such direct conflict with the power of God? Up to this time in History, they have not openly clashed, there has been no fight between them to show who has the greatest power, only skirmishes.

Now by this miracle of exorcism, the devil and his horde are put under the impenetrable gaze of Christ, *Luk 11:15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. Luk 11:16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. Luk 11:17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. Luk 11:18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub*.

Demon possession was not something new to these Jews, even if it had not got much coverage in Scripture. They reasoned that Jesus was somehow doing the works of Beelzebub, the devil, and because He was doing his work He must be evil.

If I were to ask you what particular trait characterises the devil, you would be right in saying "a liar", *Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*.

It is often attributed to Joseph Goebbels, that,

> If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.

Truth is suffering at the present time. 50 per cent of what you think is true in the news reports is a lie. See the fact checking website just to see how truth is manipulated, changed by computer graphics, spread maliciously and quickly through mobile technology. How celebrity and so called influencers are biasing the truth for personal gain, how websites are deliberately targeted with falsehood and lies becoming the new truth.

According to the Washington Post, “Donald Trump, the 45th president of the US, lied so prolifically and with such velocity that the Washington Post calculated he’d made 2,140 false or misleading claims during his first year in office – an average of 5.9 a day. His lies about everything from the investigations into Russian interference in the election, to his popularity and achievements, to how much TV he watches, these are only the brightest blinking red light among many warnings of his assault on democratic institutions and norms. He routinely assailed the press, the justice system, the intelligence agencies, the electoral system and the civil servants who make the US government tick.”

Do you know how much of what you are being told is true? What are the facts behind black lives matter, behind critical race theory, behind gender reassignment, behind climate change? Are you being manipulated by another world view? Jesus thought so and He laid this principal down, *Luk 11:18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. Luk 11:19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. Luk 11:20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you*.

He tackled the lie at its root. It was not just false or misleading information, it had a face, the face of evil, the face of satan. It was not the casting out of lies that Jesus did, it was the casting out of satan, by the finger of God, the finger that wrote upon the tablets of the law. In order to remove lies from a society, you have to remove the source of lies and you have to substitute it with God’s truth.

As Jesus says to Thomas, *Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*. **Jesus is the truth**.

Exorcism, casting out of demons, is not taught to us disciples in the NT. We live in the head bashing, heel bruising world of conflict with satan and I think we generally let it go at that. If we as a body could totally block satan and his hordes, wouldn't we do it? If we as a body had the power cast them away forever, do you think any self respecting Christian would not do it? But we were not told to do that and only occasionally when satan makes our personal ministry difficult then we respond at a personal level.

Paul was troubled by the woman with a demonic spirit, a spirit of divination, python, but he did nothing for days, *Act 16:16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: Act 16:17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. Act 16:18 **And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit,** I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. Act 16:19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers*.

The exorcism caused Paul to be thrown in jail, and miraculously released. I am sure that he did not know he would be thrown in jail, and in his mind the events were not connected. But in the mind of God they were, and the devil played a part in it.

98. A stronger kingdom *Luke 11:20 - 23*

*Luk 11:20 **But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.** Luk 11:21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: Luk 11:22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. Luk 11:23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*

The battle with the devil has come to a head, *Mat 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. Mat 9:33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, **It was***

never so seen in Israel. *Mat 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils*.

Jesus is first pitted against the devil when He is tempted, and three of the temptations are mentioned (Luke 4). There are a number of encounters with the devil and his minions up to this point in time, with no explanation of what is going on, why it is going on or where it is leading to. One general encounter is given in the parable of the sower (Luke 8 v 9 ff). It shows us how that all men are subject to the devil, but that some overcome him and are fruitful Christians. We might think that satan only attacks the weakest and these are the ones who have the cares of life, or he snatches them away so that they do not hear the word, but the fact is that all men are sinners, *Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*;

We have arrived at a point in the narrative where things become a bit clearer and we see where we are going. The devil has always been at his evil work, but he has been doing it quietly, secretly, surreptitiously, but now he is exposed for what he is,

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

It is with the rise of Jesus ministry that we see the decline of satan's work. Firstly, Christ defeats satan when He goes into the wilderness to be tested by the devil, *Luk 4:2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered*. It was not just the three temptations that He had to endure, it was forty days of continuous, unrelenting temptations.

That is a lot of temptations and just what they were we may only guess, but it says, *Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Heb 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*. We can only say that in that forty day period, he endured all of the temptations that become a man, and there I leave it.

Having defeated the devil's attempts to cause Him to sin, He broke the power of satan in the individual's life by showing that not only could He defeat personal sin, He could overcome sin in a person's life and He could break the power of satan that was restricting them, *Luk 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day*?

Then when He sent out the seventy, multiplying His power, they returned victorious, having overcome satan, removing sickness and the power of the devil, *Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. Luk 10:18 And he said unto them,* ***I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven***.

It is at this moment that we see the fall of satan from heaven. What does this mean? We saw in Job that, *Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Job 1:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil*? It was clear that satan had entrance to the presence of God, and that he had not been defeated or cast out from God's presence.

We suggest this conversation is taking place in heaven, and although we do not understand the ramifications of it, the rank of satan is similar to the "sons of God". We may have this window opened into heaven because it shows that a man, like Job, cannot stand before satan without the help of God, but Jesus can. Job descends into a debate about existentialism, about human existence, of which neither Job nor his comforters have a clue. They thrash about bringing arguments of Job's guilt being linked to his suffering until God shuts them up.

When will puny man, who knows nothing of his existence, nothing about the origins of the universe, shut up about his supposed knowledge of the universe, *Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Job 38:2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Job 38:3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Job 38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Job 38:5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Job 38:6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; Job 38:7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*? Man is ignorant and to pretend otherwise is to give ear to satan.

From the high heaven, the deceiver, the liar has finally come to his nemesis. Jesus has defeated him and he is cast out from the place where he accused the brethren, *Joh 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. Joh 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*.

I think that we can tie this message in with the book of Revelation, *Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Rev 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, Rev 12:8* ***And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven****. Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:* ***he was cast out into the earth****, and his angels were cast out with him. Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night*.

This transition marks a new phase in the operation of evil because it has shifted its base from **heaven to earth**, because the Kingdom of Heaven has is at hand, *Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. There is no place for satan in the heaven now, as it is the territory of Jesus only, who is the conqueror of evil. The devil and his companions in evil have been swept from heaven.

Where do they go? *Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*. The devil knows tat his time is running out, *Mat 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* ***art thou come hither to torment us before the time***?

I think that there are three types of people in the world today, which we have seen in the parable of the sower. There are those who have the word of God snatched from them by the devil, those who succumb to the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, which choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful, another work of the devil. Then there are those who bring forth good fruit from a good heart. The first two types of person are doomed to fail and they are the devil's forever. When he is thrown out of

heaven, he has little to do with keeping them onside, only stoking their lusts and making them more evil.

The remnant, the people bringing forth good fruit are the ones engaged in the battle with satan, *Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.* They are the people who fight the devil and overcome him.

There are many scriptures showing that the believer has the upper hand over the devil, *Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*.

Far from being a down trodden group of people, the Christians are a victorious army, *Rom 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Rom 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

It does not mean that in physical terms we will never suffer, we will, but we will also be the victors. And there are scriptures which show us how to get that victory over satan, *Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you……1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 1Pe 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world……Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*.

There is nothing to say that we have anything to fear from satan, if we hold the line. Death itself is conquered, and the last enemy is overcome with joy not with fear, *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*.

The days of satan are numbered, but the days of Christ are not, *1Jn 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this*

purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1Jn 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1Jn 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

We see the Kingdom of Christ begin to grow, as Daniel foretold, *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*. The kingdoms of the earth are declining due to the aggressive nature of sin, the entropy of sin, the work of satan. From the head of gold they deteriorate to the feet of clay, and they are all as nothing compared with the Glory of Christ.

But that kingdom, the Kingdom of Christ, is not of this world, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*. Christ does not replace a series of decadent kingdoms with people who are in the same mould, who have the same nature. It is a change in the people that is required, as well as a new kingdom.

The removal of the old requires a whole new, fresh creation, *Luk 5:36 And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. Luk 5:37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. Luk 5:38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.*

They are preserved in that heavenly kingdom made without hands, *Heb 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, **not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;** Heb 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

This is a new kingdom in every sense of the word, *Rev 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. Rev 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*.

It is a new heavens, and a new earth, notably, one without the devil, *Rev 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever*

worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

You may wonder why the current universe, to us mortals, seems infinite and it seems strange why God should build such a vast domain that exceeds our visual range or compass. If we could only travel at the speed of light, we would die having encountered 166 stars out of a universe of 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars. Why make so much "space" if we could only see a minute part of it? Well, we were not limited by death when we were created, not until we sinned, and that put a stop to everything. The infinite universe was ours to explore and in it see the wonders of an unseen God. We are unencumbered by death but forever, Eternity, is ours.

The new heaven and earth will be infinite, and the old heaven and earth is but a glimmer of its future reality. We shall not be encumbered with death and being made creatures without days, we shall rule under Him who made us a new creature.

And I do not think we shall just be "singing or playing on harps". The way God is praised through obedience and through His creation, the things He has made, which in turn cause us to praise. It is an infinite new world of praise to Him who has redeemed us. The sad old men who dress up religion and go around in frocks, are in for a surprise when all their inventions are taken away from them and the religions they made are brought to nothing. What will they do? I know what I will be doing.

99. Return of the unclean spirit *Luke 11:24 - 26*

Luk 11:24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. Luk 11:25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Luk 11:26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Firstly, there is something else included in Matthew and Mark that is absent in Luke, and it relates to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, *Mat 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him:*

but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come……. Mar 3:28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: Mar 3:29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: *Mar 3:30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit*.

Blasphemy is spoken of further on in *Luke's gospel, Luk 12:10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven*. Why they are so positioned in the different accounts, I do not know, but it may be that the Lord has said it in Luke, but put it in a practical way, *Luk 11:15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. Luk 11:16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. Luk 11:17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.*

Matthew and Mark tell us that blasphemy against the Spirit brings eternal damnation, but give us little idea of what it consists in. Luke gives us a concrete example of that blasphemy, that is, attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil, *Luk 11:15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.*

The passage that we are looking at deals with the post-exorcism state of a man, what happens to a man who has had a devil cast out from him. In Matthew it says, *Mat 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Mat 12:44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Mat 12:45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation*.

We have seen in Luke's gospel, Jesus casts out the devil and the man speaks again and was no longer dumb. This started a debate over whether Jesus cast out devils because He was in league with satan. He answers them that a house divided cannot stand and warns them against their blasphemy. We then come to this extraordinary passage, which tells us what happens to the devil who is cast out and the post-exorcism man.

The devil goes off wandering and not finding anywhere to rest, goes back to the original place where he had been cast out from. Like the Gaderene demons they wanted a place to live even if it was in the pigs. It is a sort of "limbo", limbus, an

edge or boundary of hell in the teaching of the catholics, but I use the term as a place that devils are kept, before they go to judgement, namely the Abyss, the bottomless pit. The devil is cast out of heaven to the earth, but has no permanent dwelling here.

We do not know exactly what happens to us, but I will speculate and that is all it is, speculation. I think that we should start at the beginning of life, when God brought us into existence. What happened? I suppose we grew in consciousness to a point of self-awareness, when we had a sense of what "good and evil" were, by the standard of society into which we were born. There were other forces at work in the background, the whole of the spiritual realm was involved in a war, but we were not aware of that. When we did wrong, by the Lord's standard, we did not know it was wrong, and we had no inkling of offending God, unless we picked up on it in the Bible, but that was not generally the case, particularly in my generation. We were generally ignorant of anything spiritual.

The real world contained creatures that we were not aware of, creatures called angels. Some of these creatures fell away from the creator, *Jud 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.* These we assume became what are called demons or devils, and the leader of them is called, *Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him*.

Just how the good angels and the demons interact with us is not clear, and when God chooses to send them to us, and in what measure they are sent, is not revealed. We know that the devil seeks permission to attack us and it is in the power of God to stop them, *Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. Job 1:12* ***And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand****. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD*. The devil cannot strike at will.

We also know that God has His angels protect some children, *Mat 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.* These children are the ones who believe in Christ, *Mat 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. Mat 18:6 But whoso*

shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Just as the devils torment man, the angels provide succour, and one of the reasons given for this is, *Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares*. There are examples of angel's delivering men, *Act 12:7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. Act 12:8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. Act 12:9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.* The angels have their counterpart with devils, but we do not know the plans God has for using them.

There is also the hint of "guardian" angels, which we saw with the believing children. There is also the hint that the guardian takes on the likeness of the person he is protecting, *Act 12:14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and* ***told how Peter stood before the gate****. Act 12:15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so.* ***Then said they, It is his angel****. Act 12:16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished*. There must have been a belief among the early disciples that a man who was a Christian had a personal angel and that the angel looked like him. Isn't it true that imitation is the greatest form of a compliment?

What advanced knowledge these angels get of God's plan is not known, *1Pe 1:12 And it was made clear to those prophets that they were God's servants not for themselves but for you, to give you word of the things which have now come to your ears from the preachers of the good news through the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; things which even angels have a desire to see.* BBE.

How much they know about "who" we will become and what we will do, and with what joy they look forward to our new birth and taking care of us, is not known. The angels were certainly found praising God at Jesus birth, and I think they are there when we sons of God are born, praising Him for His work, as this is the Saviours glory above this. They are with us all our lives until we die, and then we shall rejoice with them in the final victory of Christ. We shall give thanks to them for being there and who knows where that friendship will lead in eternity. They will take us to glory, *Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and* ***was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom****: the rich man also died, and was buried*.

We know about satan's evil, but what about possession by good angels? Is it possible that a good angel can possess a man if a fallen angel can? I do not see a good angel possessing or working in a believer because that would be the work of the Holy Spirit. I do not see a good angel in the man who is possessed by the devil, because it serves no purpose and would likely corrupt the angel. Good angels are not recorded as possessing individuals in the bible. They do however fight evil but exactly how is not known, *Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels……Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

Having very briefly skimmed the functions of angels, we now turn to the case of when an angel, an evil angel, a devil, is cast out of the individual. Clearly the demon has no place among God's angels, he only has the fellowship of the damned and it is not clear that the demons are any consolation to each other, as there is no good news for them. They know that their time is coming to an end, and anything, even the life in pigs, is preferable since it is a reminder of life, its vitality, before they go to the abyss, the bottomless pit.

Does the Lord let all the demons back? I don't know for sure but I give you a thought. When the devil goes out of a man, the man is left with an empty house. Not devoid of a person, not totally empty, because it is the home where the individual that is possessed lives, as Peter says, *2Pe 1:14 Knowing that shortly* ***I must put off this my tabernacle****, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me*.

But when the devil is cast out, he doesn't share it with anyone. According to this passage in Luke, demons may not be cast out forever. There is a period of quiet. The devils do not have any senses according to the bible, or if they do they have a range of different functions. They are not made like us, *Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* They have a task to do and whatever that task involves, they are made appropriate to do it.

I think that this lack of sensuality makes humanity a prime target for satan and his demons. The devils use a man to sense the physical world. In a manner of speaking, they plug into us like a parasite and share and govern our physical being. There is no desire to kill us immediately, only to live off of us as long as possible. Perhaps the reason men have nightmares is because when their system is asleep, the devils have even more freedom over the mind?

That is the reason I think, that the evil spirits want to get back in their home, and that is what motivates them. The demons get a taste of life, lust, life without God, gluttony, *a*dultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings. The human being is a play ground for the devil and the devil has no access to that play ground but by a man, so of course he wants to get back.

This might explain the strange verse in Genesis, *Gen 6:2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.* Could it be that this offspring was the result of demon possession of the sons of God and that they had offspring as a result of possession. But we know angels do not procreate so can devils?

The demon may go back to terrorise the person again, taking others with him and making the last state of the man far worse than the former. What can a man do about this? It is something to think about.

Demon possession may be total, partial or just a whisper in the ear, but for all men, there is some control, *Eph 2:1 In the past you were dead because you sinned and fought against God. Eph 2:2 You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil. He rules the world, and* ***his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God***. CEV.

What goes in place of satan's is critical to the individual. If the demon is replaced by the Holy Spirit, as a result of being born again, he has a different expectation, *Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, the individual has come to a new life, he is finally and absolutely free.

As Paul says, *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*:

For those who think that a healing lasts forever, they had better take note. It doesn't. Jesus says that a devil may go back with companions and inhabit the man again, if they are not born again. And the new birth does not ward off all

evil, because Christians are subject to disease but not demonisation. It is a warning amongst all those who argue that they have been exorcised of demons for the question is, “What have you put in its place?”

We remind ourselves that this passing world, is not our home, not the permanent possession of believers and although we may have different world views, the one that counts is Christ’s, and, *Luk 11:23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth*.

If we are not working for Christ, if we do not gather with Christ, then we are against Him and scattering the things that He sets up. We are doing the devils work for him.

100. Who is blessed? *Luke 11:27 - 28*

Luk 11:27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. Luk 11:28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

> On Oct. 11, 2022, the Catholic Church marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, more commonly known as Vatican II. Nearly 60 years ago, Vatican II recognized several titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but it focused on one in particular: “Mother.” While the council addressed many issues, it aimed to present the Church to the modern world. Bishops worldwide gathered at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome for the event, which consisted of a series of four deliberative sessions from 1962 until 1965.
>
> One of the principal documents produced by the council features a chapter centred on Mary. Lumen gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, was released by Pope Paul VI on Nov. 21, 1964.
>
> During an address that day, the Roman pontiff confirmed Mary’s title as “Mother of the Church” and called the chapter about her Lumen gentium’s “apex.”
>
> “For it is the first time — and to say so fills our hearts with deep emotion — that an Ecumenical Council has presented such an extensive synthesis of Catholic doctrine on the place of Mary Most Holy in the mystery of Christ and of the Church,” he said.

The people who wrote that, could be there with that short sighted, emotional band of “women’s libbers”, all thinking of themselves as the mother of Jesus, all crying out for Mary’s recognition, putting Christ in second place. Contrast that sentiment with Jesus’ words, *“On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it.”* WEB. It does not take long for a group of people to take a thought and grow it beyond its meaning. I remember a scene in the film “Life of Brian”,

> Brian is trying to escape a crowd of followers who think him a real prophet when he is only pretending to be one in order to escape the Roman soldiers pursuing him. In Brian’s haste, he drops a gourd that someone had forced into his hands earlier. One of the women among them picks up the gourd Brian drops, and excitedly proclaims it to be a sacred sign from the prophet.
>
> The crowd is ecstatic to have found this sacred relic, and pursues Brian again when his sandal falls off and and he continues his flight with one bare foot and one foot in a sandal. When the pursuing crowd finds Brian’s abandoned sandal, an argument immediately breaks out between those who continue to worship the gourd and those who adopt the sandal as the superior sign of the prophet. This second group fractures just as quickly, one side arguing that everyone should wear just one sandal, like their prophet Brian. The other half arrogantly claiming a superior position, understanding the sandal merely to be symbolic of some deeper meaning, not to be taken in the literal, primitive sense of the first group.

That’s very insightful about how errors come into a church, and before you know it, everybody has forgotten where the error came from, but continue to do it out of some deeply ingrained habit. Mary, the simple Jewish girl, mother of the Saviour of the World, goes from a mother to becoming Mother of the Church. That happened through a lot of speculation and none of it Biblical.

There are a number of reasons for this and I think the two of the major reasons are, the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Church.

> The authority of Scripture means every word and stroke of the Bible possesses the authority of God and the right to rule the hearts, minds, and bodies of every inhabitant of the earth. Scripture’s authority doesn’t depend on whether mankind cooperates with it or understands it. Its authority depends on the power and supremacy of its Author—God. Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), which means

> Scripture is God speaking and thus has the final say in all matters—whether we choose to submit to it or not.

The authority of the church is a little more difficult to explain. I am using it in the sense that it is the body of people making up a denomination, who interpret scripture with additional evidences that the Bible has not given them. This "authority", this contradictory or additional information, constitutes the authority of the church as opposed to the authority of Christ, which is the authority of scripture.

Surely the two things should agree, the authority of Scripture is the authority of the church, but you only have to look at churches to see how they have deviated from the word. The dressing up in all manner of unusual clothes was not given to the New Testament church, as a distinctive of those people serving the church. The development of traditions has been added to the fabric of worship, and the one which is nearly upon us, "Christmas", is a total invention of the churches. It may have been invented out of a sense of reverence, honouring God, but that is not what it has become, and the commercialisation of Christmas, loaded with myths and fairy tales. It has nothing to do with Christianity and relies totally upon the authority of the church, not upon the authority of scripture, "*blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it".*

The Bible contains many different themes, including instructions, stories, poetry, and prophecies, the creation, miracles, national history and the history of redemption, among other genres. The collection of materials that are accepted as part of the Bible by a particular religious tradition or community is called a biblical canon. Believers in the Bible generally consider it to be a product of divine inspiration, but the way they understand what that means and interpret the text can vary.

One of the subjects which illustrate our position on the authority of scripture is the subject of the Creation. There are two basic views, biblical creationism and evolution. Both are religious views and need faith to uphold their position since there is no empirical evidence to support any origin of life. We spoke of fairy stories, and this is another one invented by people to explain the origin of life. It goes something like this. Once upon a time, in the very distant past, a magical event occurred, atoms developed into living things and progressed by gradual undirected changes to form a man.

"The Origin of Life is the hardest question in science. No one knows how the first cell came about. But there's a simpler, more fundamental question: **Where did the *information* come from**? An answer will trigger a quantum leap in Artificial Intelligence. This may be as big as the transistor or the discovery of DNA itself. A

new $10 million prize seeks a definitive answer". To date, the evolutionists, with all their certainty and confidence about the origins of life have NOT claimed this prize.

Worst of all, this view of the origins of life, the evolutionary hypothesis, has entered the realms of the churches. They have put aside the direct teaching of scripture in favour of the current unbelieving scientific world view. Just listen to one of their apologists, John Stott, a supposed evangelical, scrabbling to find some meaning in Scripture while embracing, nay clinging to evolution.

> But surely the human fossil and skeleton records indicates that the genus *homo* existed hundreds of thousands of years before the New Stone Age? Yes. *Homo sapiens* (modern) is usually traced back to about 100,000 years ago, and *homo sapiens* (archaic) to about half a million years ago, *homo erectus* to about 1.8 million years ago, and *homo habilis* even to two million years ago.
>
> Moreover, *homo habilis* was already making stone tools in East and South Africa; *homo erectus* was making wooden tools as well and living in caves and camps, while *homo sapiens* (especially in the European Stone Age sub-species Neanderthal man), although still a hunter-gatherer, was beginning to paint, carve and sculpt, and even to care for the sick and bury the dead. But were these species of *homo* 'human' in the *biblical* sense, created in the image of God, endowed with rational, moral and spiritual faculties which enabled them to know and love their Creator?
>
> Ancient skeletons cannot answer the question; the evidence they supply is anatomical rather than behavioural. Even signs of cultural development do not prove that those involved were authentically human, that is, God-like. **The likelihood is that they were all pre-Adamic hominids, still *homo sapiens* and not yet *homo divinus*, if we may so style Adam**.

I have underlined the speculative elements of that invented tale which shows that despite death entering the world, Adam was real but the biblical history was wrong. Moses was not only wrong he was not inspired.

Let me try to explain what has happened in this fairy tale. The Bible is neither solely a scientific text book, nor only a history of the whole of creation, but where it reveals scientific insight and where it notes history, I say it is correct in its observations, because it is written by God, *2Ti 3:15 Since childhood, you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise enough to have faith in Christ Jesus and be saved. 2Ti 3:16* ***Everything in the Scriptures is God's***

***Word**. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live. 2Ti 3:17 The Scriptures train God's servants to do all kinds of good deeds.* CEV.

The book confronts us with these statements, *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.* From that statement of Christ the Creator is echoed in the teaching of Marriage, and put the first created pair as the authority for marriage, not a long line of monkeys which turned into Adam and Eve. This is another fairy story.

Mar 10:6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. Mar 10:7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; Mar 10:8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. Mar 10:9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder…… Gen 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Gen 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

You choose what story you will believe, *Jos 24:14 Then Joshua told the people: Worship the LORD, obey him, and always be faithful. Get rid of the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the other side of the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Jos 24:15 But if you don't want to worship the LORD, then choose right now! Will you worship the same idols your ancestors did? Or since you're living on land that once belonged to the Amorites, maybe you'll worship their gods. I won't. **My family and I are going to worship and obey the LORD**! Jos 24:16 The people answered: We could never worship other gods or stop worshiping the LORD*.

It is as if someone has added information to the Bible. Can you imagine a science book which you did not like and so you altered some of the stories, some of the formulas to make it more acceptable to you? Ernst Haeckel did just that.

> Haeckel came up with a theory that considerably shaped the science of his day. He called his theory the Biogenetic Law, also known under the catchphrase: ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’. Embryonic development he said, was actually a record of evolutionary history. The

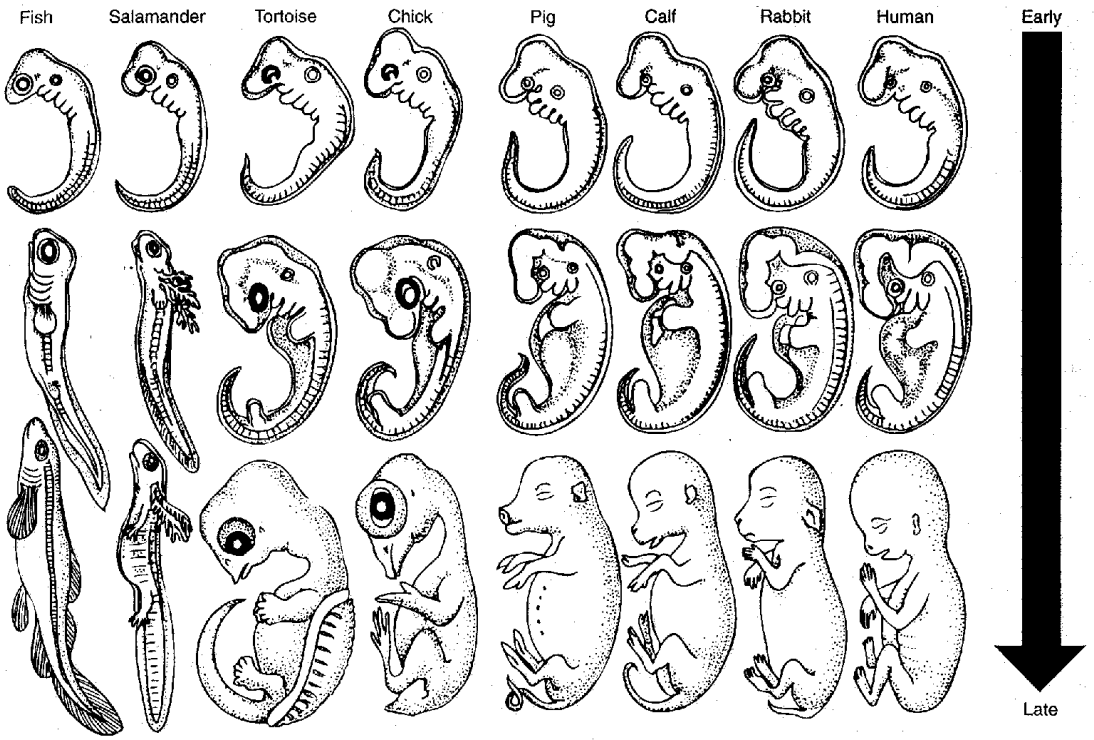


FIGURE 5.38 **Haeckel's comparison of early embryonic stages across vertebrate groups.** Eight species are shown across the figure. The youngest developmental stage of each is at the top of the figure followed by two successively older stages below.

After Haeckel.

www.bible.ca
Vertebrates, Kenneth V. Kardong, 1998,p 191

single cell corresponded to amoeba-like ancestors, developing eventually into a sea squirt, a fish, and so on.

Haeckel taught that, over eons of time, certain fish evolved into amphibians, some of which evolved into reptiles. In turn, some reptiles evolved into birds, and others into mammals. Recapitulation theory holds that each embryo of higher life forms replays its presumed ancestral history as it develops. In other words, at one point between your conception and birth, you resembled a fish (in its embryonic stage).

It's a testament to what the journal Science has said in an article frankly titled, "Haeckel's Embryos: Fraud Rediscovered": "Generations of biology students may have been misled by a famous set of drawings of embryos published 123 years ago by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel." Haeckel was so convinced of his Biogenetic Law that he was willing to bend evidence to support it. The truth is that the development of embryos does not fit into the strict progression that Haeckel claimed. Echidnas, for example, develop their limbs much later than most other mammals. But in his illustrations of echidna embryos, Haeckel deceptively omitted limb buds at early stages, despite the fact

> that limb buds do exist then. In Haeckel's own day, some biologists recognized his sleights of hand, but nevertheless the Biogenetic Law became very popular, and Haeckel's illustrations even found their way into biology textbooks.

Those illustrations are still in some text books and "If you repeat something, people are more likely to believe it", is why it continues to believed. The Bible has undergone the same mis-treatment. A false "idea" has led to a reassessment of Biblical truth. A false idea has become a mainstream practice and a resulting doctrine of the Church, the authority of the church, but this is at odds with the Authority of Scripture. So called "Christians" are doing the same thing to the Bible. They are inserting pages of error or accepting as true what is not even written.

It is in part due to the lack of bible knowledge of the bible. This survey (By Sam Hailes, 29 January 2019, Premier Christianity) found that most Christian millennials in the UK (51%), engage with the Bible a few times a year, or less. Only 9% read the Bible every day and a mere 13% look at the scriptures "a few times a week". Millennials have more access to the scriptures than any other generation before us. YouVersion's Bible App gives us free access to 1,839 Bible versions in 1,275 languages. You can even download an audio Bible read by Poirot! Clearly access to the scriptures is not a problem. We've a wealth of tools, the problem is we're not using them. The consequence is error through neglect but "*blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it".*

This brings me back to our story, *"Luk 11:27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked"*. There is truth in this story because, *Luk 1:48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth* ***all generations shall call me blessed***.

Mary was blessed, but the people did not see the world from Jesus perspective, they did not see His importance and they did not see the importance of what He was doing. Mary was far more blessed for being Mary, in their estimation, than Jesus was for being the Redeemer of His people. The blessing that God gave, which far outweighed the blessing on Mary was, "*blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it".*

Yes, keep it or as the Greek says, preserve it, guard it, for when you have lost even the slightest bit of it, the rest crumbles, and you are left with nothing of value, only the inventions of man.

101. The sign of Jonah pt 1 *Luke 11:29 - 32*

Luk 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. Luk 11:30 ***For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites****, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Luk 11:32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. ..... Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: Mat 12:40* ***For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth****.*

Jesus gives mankind only one sign, the one thing which authenticated His ministry, namely the “sign of Jonah”. Not signs, but sign, singular, although there were two main events, He calls them “a sign”. It flags up what He is about, the core of His Ministry, the thing He would draw their attention to. He may sound severe in His reproach, but He is helping them, showing Himself in a parable.

No other sign was given in His lifetime, although there were many signs and wonders done by Jesus, none was ever given to authenticate Him except this sign. In simple computing terms, authentication is the process of verifying who a user is, while authorization is the process of verifying what they have access to. We are looking at Jesus, and who He is, and that is shown from the life of a prophet, Jonah.

Jesus is saying to the people, you want some verification as to who **I am**, you just look to Jonah, because that is all I am giving you. Well you say, aren’t all the miracles Jesus did, verification of who He was, but the sceptic could say that others did miracles also and they were not the Messiah*, Mat 16:13 When Jesus and his disciples were near the town of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "What do people say about the Son of Man?" Mat 16:14 The disciples answered, "Some people say you are John the Baptist or maybe Elijah or Jeremiah or some other prophet." Mat 16:15 Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Mat 16:16 Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* So this is the sign to the world as to who Jesus was.

You may remember we touched on Jonah’s life earlier (Chapter 61. The Storm)

> Jonah son of Amittai the prophet (**יונה בן־אמתי הנביא**), was from Gath-Hepher, a town in Galilee about 2 miles northeast of Nazareth. Gath Hepher was in the territory allotted to the tribe of Zebulun (see Josh 19:10, 13), so it is likely Jonah was a member of that tribe. Two miles from Nazareth puts Jonah as a neighbour of Jesus although in an earlier time. The region of Galilee, in the time of Jonah was in the territory of Israel, not Judah, the northern 10 tribes as opposed to the one tribe of Judah.

Now it was not just that Jonah was only a sign to the Ninevites (in Luke) but he was a sign of the resurrection according to Matthew, *Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* I am led to the conclusion that not just the event in Luke's gospel was a verification of Jesus the Messiah, but that all the events which occurred in Jonah's life, recorded in the bible, were a verification of the Messiah, and that Jonah is a type of the Messiah in the OT.

If the people wanted to know who Jesus was, they need look no further than Jonah. We as Christians have a host of answers as to why the Bible is true, who Jesus is and why you should follow Him, and all the doctrine that goes with that, but Jesus only gave one sign of who He was, and that was of an obscure prophet who got swallowed and vomited out by a fish. Surely we could find a more significant sign than this? I wouldn't have chosen an obscure prophet to set forth the Glory of the Messiah. I wouldn't have chosen such a controversial image of a man swallowed by a fish which sounds crazy to this modern generation and appeals to Sunday School children at best. I wouldn't have chosen Jonah because he went to the gentiles and not the Jews (I am thinking like a Jew of that time).

Jesus just goes out of His way to court controversy and this is most controversial. He gives us hard things to believe in, but then, that is the way of faith. Most people give up at the story of a man being swallowed by a fish. Paul had a similar response to the resurrection by the Greeks, *Act 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.* The resurrection is a stumbling block.

I believe that the whole of the Book of Jonah is about Christ, *Luk 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Luk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*. Not some of the scriptures but "**in all the scriptures**". From Genesis to Deuteronomy, from Joshua to Kings, in all of the prophetic writings, in all of the

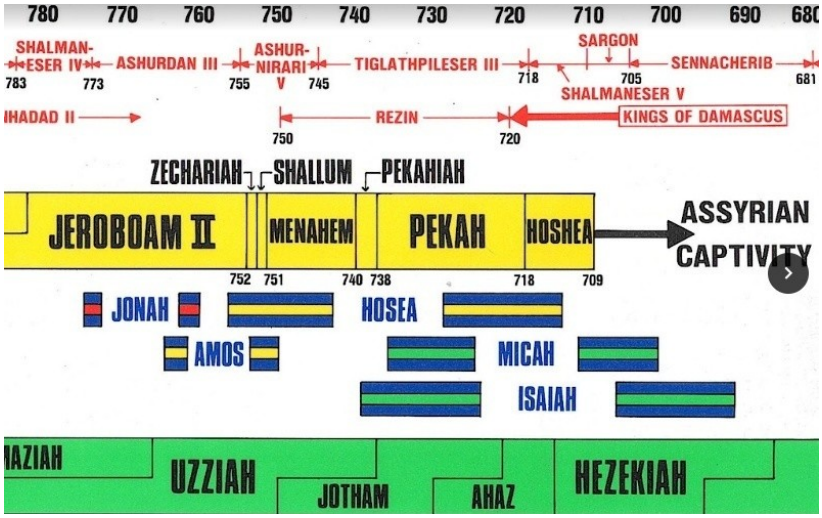
wisdom literature, He showed Himself. The Bible is a book about Christ, and from the many places where He is shown, but He chooses Jonah as the Sign.

I will not go into it here but suggest that there are so many points at which we say “Ah, I’ve seen that scripture before” in the ministry of Jesus, and here it draws us back to Jonah. The particular events in the life of Jonah which Jesus draws our attention to are, “Jonah and the fish” and “Jonah preaching to Nineveh”. *Mat 12:40* ***For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth***, and *Luk 11:30* ***For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites.***

I do not know what sort of fish it was that swallowed Jonah but it was a miraculous event, and whether he was alive at the end of the three days, being captive in that blacked out place of stinking fish and foul aired corruption, I do not know, but it was called hell. Jonah prayed with his remaining breath, *Jon 2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, Jon 2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. Jon 2:3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Jon 2:4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. Jon 2:5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. Jon 2:6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. Jon 2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. Jon 2:8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. Jon 2:9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. Jon 2:10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*

If you think that you have read this before, you have, and it is almost verbatim of Psalm 18 with a bit of Psalm 31 and Psalm 116 in the mix. The principal Psalm 18 is about king David’s deliverance from Saul, written after the event, *Psa 18:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said, I will love thee, O LORD, my strength*. It uses poetic language to describe the deliverance by God, *Psa 18:4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. Psa 18:5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me*.

Jonah had the same experience that he records after the event. But these are Jesus words too, in what must be another Messianic psalm, as He describes His death on the cross, and by these words, Jonah is speaking of Christ's death and resurrection. Jonah heads away from the land of Nineveh, going in the opposite direction, but why? The time of Jonah coincides with the days of the Assyrian empire of which Nineveh was the capital. Nineveh is located in modern day Mosel, in northern Iraq and the prophet Jonah is said to be buried here in the "Nabi Younis Shrine" (Jonah's tomb). Strangely, Nineveh from one derivation of the name means "fish". The cuneiform for Ninâ (𒉺) is a fish within a house (cf. Aramaic nuna, "fish"). This may have simply intended "Place of Fish" or may have indicated a goddess associated with fish or the Tigris, possibly originally of Hurrian origin.



We find mention of the prophet Jonah in the second book of Kings, where God looked upon the affliction of Israel and Jonah prophesied that Israel would be delivered, *2Ki 14:25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to* ***the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher****. Ki 14:26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. 2Ki 14:27 And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. 2Ki 14:28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

Jehovah, having forgiven Israel, is also merciful to Nineveh and this appears to be a cause of concern to Jonah and so he ignores the Lord. I want you to note, that in Jonah's prophecy, this event, the forgiveness of Israel, comes before he is swallowed by the fish. This is before the "three days and three nights" in the belly of the fish, which I would suggest, "typically", represents the time of the OT. In that "OT" time Jonah must not go to the gentiles, just as Christ in His day must

not go to the gentiles, *Mat 15:24 Jesus said, "I was sent only to the people of Israel! They are like a flock of lost sheep."*

So Jonah, in imitation of Christ, does not want to go to Nineveh. He takes the nation of Israel to himself, being the voice of God to the Nation, and he takes the whole with him, in effect, to the opposite direction. Jonah was angry with the Lord and we see why later on in the narrative, *Jon 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. Jon 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil..... Jon 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle*?

Jonah was a patriot, and he did not think Jehovah was being fair to Israel, letting the enemy who oppressed her, have the same forgiveness. He sets off from Joppa, in the opposite direction but God intervenes in a storm and Jonah is thrown overboard, *Jon 1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. Jon 1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Jon 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.*

I think that Jonah is acting out Christ's death, written from an OT perspective. He is prophesying Christ's death and the reason for His death. Jonah is dying for the nation of Israel, so too, Christ is dying. The Jews should have realised this but they were blind, they wanted a sign that verified the Messiah. Well here it is if you will receive it, the death and resurrection of the Christ, the Messiah.

It was "*an evil generation"* Jesus was dealing with. They could have found out about the Messiah from the OT, especially Isaiah 53. They would have seen that He suffered, they would have seen that He died, but the majority of religious leaders did not believe the scripture. So Jesus gives them a scripture, He gives them the book of Jonah.

Jesus is not just saying, "I will give you a sign", He really does give them a sign. It is not just to that generation, it is to every generation that will not believe, it is to us also. He gives us a sign, the sign of a man swallowed by a fish, and if you find that hard to swallow you are among the unbelieving generation who will be swallowed by hell.

102. The sign of Jonah pt 2 *Luke 11:29 - 32*

Luk 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. Luk 11:30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Luk 11:32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

We suggested that Jonah was moved by the Spirit within him to imitate Christ, Whether he knew what he was doing at the time, that he was going to be used as a sign of the Messiah is not known, *1Pe 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 1Pe 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1Pe 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed,* ***that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you*** *by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

I think that Jonah gets a bad press, as a deeply misunderstood man. Men are quick to judge others to lessen their own faults. Because Lot lived in Sodom, they think the worst of him, while they themselves willingly live in a world that will get a greater judgement than Sodom. The Bible makes it clear, *2Pe 2:7 And delivered* ***just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked****: 2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;).* Lot was good man and a righteous man, so be careful what you say about him.

It is as if men gravitate towards thinking the worse of individuals rather than the best. Even that very good website, that does so much to open the scriptures for us, called the Bible Project, turns on poor Jonah, seeing him as a “mean and nasty prophet”, not seeing that the sign of the prophet Jonah was the sign of Christ. Through ignorance they heap up scandal and lies upon those poor souls, not knowing that they are good men and by the things they suffer in life, they are

giving us an object lesson. Jonah has suffered this fate and by association so does Jesus.

I see Jonah's ministry as divided into two parts, with the dividing line occurring at the event where the fish swallows and vomits him out. This is the point of division of the story into its two parts, and we might call them BD, before death and AD, after death. His ministry is part 1, typically the OT, before the Cross, and part 2, typically, what he does when he comes back from the dead. It is foreshadowing the work of Christ, and Jonah gives us a condensed look at the work of Christ. Having laid his life on the line for Israel, having suffered a horrible death, having been in the grave for 3 days and nights, Jonah mirrors the Saviour's work.

Now having come back from the dead, Jonah is going to preach repentance to the gentiles, the gospel of life, *Jon 3:4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Jon 3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them*.

The nation are seized with the truth of the message, and they take it to heart, not like the Jews of Christ's day who rejected it and they repent and God repents of the evil He would do them, *Jon 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not*.

The love of God is shown to all men by Christ, as all men are in the same wretched condition, *Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. Rom 5:10* ***For if, when we were enemies****, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* Jew and Gentile, Israel and Babylon, were all at one time, enemies of God, all deserving equally the same punishment of death, but grace came and saved some of them, *Jon 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not*.

The story of Jonah ends with the story of the "gourd", which God caused to spring up, then wither, making Jonah angry with God, *Jon 4:6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. Jon 4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered..... Jon 4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou*

hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: Jon 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Surely we cannot attribute this act of Jonah to Christ as well? I think we can and I do so in the following manner. Jonah is still annoyed that God saved the Ninevites through his preaching, but never the less, he preached the whole council of God. If anyone might say that Jonah was half hearted in his attempt to save the Ninevites, that is plainly shown to be false by the outcome. But Jonah loved his people the Jews, and that is the point of this story. Jesus too loved the Jews*, Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

This rhetorical device, Jonah taking pity on the gourd, enables God to address the issue of why He went to Nineveh. It brings out for our benefit, what Jonah, the faithful speaker of the word of God, went to the gentiles for. God went because He had pity on the nation, *Luk 12:27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Luk 12:28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith*? If man cares about something on which he has bestowed no labour, some ephemeral gourd, then know this, that God has even more care over the souls of His people.

We might think that Jesus came solely to rebuke the nation, to bring fire upon the Jews, to execute judgement, but that is incorrect, because He loved them, *Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* The Jews walked contrary to Jesus despite His many tokens of love, the greatest of which was laying His life down for them, as Jonah did.

So there is the story of Jonah, the sign which Christ gave to the doubting Jews, *Luk 11:30* ***For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation****.* The people in that far off day, in that far off city of Nineveh, showed far more contrition than the people standing before Jesus, *Luk 11:32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* As Dr Gill sagely observes,

….what in this case will aggravate the condemnation of the Jews in the day of judgment is, that these men were Heathens, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, and were not used to have prophets sent to them; and yet as soon as Jonas, a mere man, came to them, and preached but one sermon among them, they repented of their sins, and turned from them; whereas the Jews, who had a better notion of religion, and who, though they had the Son of God himself among them, and preached to them, and that many sermons, and whose ministry was confirmed by miracles, and afterwards his apostles for a course of years, had yet remained impenitent and unbelieving.

The Lord also mentions one other point here, *Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

This refers to the queen of Sheba, who Josephus calls the queen of Egypt or Ethiopia, *1Ki 10:4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, 1Ki 10:5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. 1Ki 10:6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. 1Ki 10:7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. 1Ki 10:8* ***Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom***.

The people wanted signs that Jesus was the Messiah, and that is not too unreasonable, for Mark quotes Jesus Himself, warning against false Messiahs, *Mar 13:21 If someone should say, "Here is the Messiah!" or "There he is!" don't believe it. Mar 13:22 False messiahs and false prophets will come and work miracles and signs. They will even try to fool God's chosen ones*. CEV.

It is right that we test the spirits, *1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1Jn 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*: It would be insane if you just accepted the words of men without any test, even what I say to you, you must test.

All religions must undergo the same searching test of who is the Messiah. I do not just mean who is Jesus the man, but what He stands for and what He said. When you are confronted with a religion that professes to know Christ, what does it say about Him? Are you in such a hurry to join up with a religion that you neglect to do due diligence? Most people do just that. Billy Graham preached and at the end of half an hour, hundreds of people are prepared to go along with him, and it's the same with the other religions, cults or sects. They are snared by such little information and you wouldn't buy a washing machine from them with the small amount of information that is given out. But you buy into their religion.

If you are seeking to find the Messiah, the Christ, then He gives you enough time to be sceptical over the decision and to seek the truth. He does not tell you to make a quick decision to join a "church", to become affiliated with some group that you know even less about. He does not tell you that you have got to go to the school of man before you can go to the school of God. A man might guide you but a man is not essential to you, not a permanent feature of your religion, Jesus is.

Look at this story of the Ethiopian eunuch who got hold of a bible (quite a thing in those days) and was finding the passage difficult to understand.

Act 8:30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? Act 8:31 And he said, How can I, except some man should ***guide me****? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. Act 8:32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: Act 8:33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. Act 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Act 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and* ***preached unto him Jesus****. Act 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? Act 8:37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Act 8:38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. Act 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing*.

Firstly the eunuch was reading scripture, not Bible notes, not the Watchtower, not Daily Light or Every Day with Jesus, he was studying God's word, searching for Himself. Secondly, Philip is a guide not a permanent fixture in his life. Thirdly,

Philip preached Jesus in answer to his query, nothing else. Philip responds to the eunuchs desire to be baptised, but he does not pressure him into baptism, it comes from the eunuch alone. Fourthly the eunuch is not invited to be a member of a church or organisation, that's something for him to sort out. Fifthly, the eunuch does not sit permanently under Philip's ministry, and as if to emphasise this, the Lord whisks him away.

I think the evil and adulterous generation was the opposite to the eunuch. It was not prepared to go into scripture but just wanted an easy option, something to believe, and not the whole council of God.

Do we need teachers? I think so, but only as "guides", because every believer should be studying for themselves. The modern idea is that you go along weekly to hear a man give a sermon because you are too lazy to study. You are paying a hireling to do what you should be doing. You are opting out of the responsibility of being a Christian, you are opting out of discipleship, and you are opting out of having the biggest safeguard to your faith.

The bible teaches that we do not need man to teach us, *1Jn 2:26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 1Jn 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*. Man, may guide, and teach, but above all, the believer must trust to the Spirit of Christ to teach him.

103. Light and Dark *Luke 11:33 - 36*

Luk 11:33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. Luk 11:34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine ***eye is single****, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Luk 11:35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. Luk 11:36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.*

It has been suggested by many people that when they look at the eyes of a dying animal, "the light in them goes out". It is as if the soul has left and the whole creature shut down and an empty shell remains. They also say that "life flashes before one's eyes" at that moment of death.

According to Scientific American (September 2017),

> A growing body of research reveals that looking at a person's eyes may be a neglected and powerful way of seeing into the indivisual. The phrases "the eyes are the window to the soul" and "I can see it in your eyes" certainly sound poetic. Many singers, songwriters and writers have capitalized on it. But it turns out that the eyes really might *be* the windows to the soul. And here's the great thing about eyes: even if people don't want you to know how they feel, they can't change how their eyes behave. So how does this work?
>
> The first thing to look for is changes in pupil size. A famous study published in 1960 suggests that how wide or narrow pupils are reflects how information is processed, and how relevant it is. In their experiment, the two experimental psychologists Hess and Polt of the University of Chicago asked male and female participants to look at semi-nude pictures of both sexes. Female participants' pupil sizes increased in response to viewing men, and male participants' pupils increased in response to viewing women.
>
> In subsequent studies, Hess and Polt find that homosexual participants looking at semi-nude pictures of men (but not women) also had larger pupils. This should come to no surprise: after all, pupils can also reflect how aroused we are. But women's pupils also responded to pictures of mothers holding babies. Hence, changes in pupil size don't only reflect how aroused we are, but also how relevant and interesting what we see is.
>
> This idea was extended in a 1966 study led by Daniel Kahneman, now a Nobel-prize winning psychologist at Princeton University. He asked participants to remember several three to seven digit numbers, which participants had to report back after two seconds. As participants had to remember longer strings of digits, their pupil size increased, suggesting that pupil size is related to information processing more generally. The first step to know what someone is thinking is to look deeply into their eyes.
>
> In addition to crude information processing, our eyes also convey much more sensitive signals which other people can pick up on. Consider a recent study led by David Lee of the University of Colorado at Boulder who showed participants images of other people's eyes, and asked them to determine what emotions that person was expressing. It turns out that participants were highly accurate in determining emotions,

such as fear and anger, just from looking at images of other people's eyes.

The eyes can also reveal much more complex phenomena: they can convey whether we are lying or telling the truth. In a 2009 study conducted by Andrea Webb and her colleagues at the University of Utah, one group of participants was asked to steal $20 from a secretary's purse, whereas a control group did not steal anything. Irrespective of whether participants had stolen the $20, the experimenters asked all participants to deny the theft. Later, by analyzing pupil dilation in response to denying the theft, the researchers were able to tell—better than chance—whether a participant was a thief. Participants who lied about the theft had pupils that were one millimetre larger compared to the pupils of innocent participants.

Our eyes can also serve as a good detector for what people like. To accomplish this, it is necessary to look at pupil size in combination with where someone is looking. Think back to a recent restaurant visit where you had to decide what to eat. These decisions can be simple, for example, if you know straight away what you want. But at other times, such decisions can denote difficult trade-offs, for example when choosing between what you should eat (a salad) and what you want to eat (a burger). Here's the interesting thing: when the decision is difficult, your eyes are likely to switch back and forth between the different options you are considering, and our last gaze tends to be at the option we end up choosing. And so, by observing where someone is looking, we can infer which options they consider.

One way to study this type of difficult trade-offs is offering monetary bets to participants, such as a 20% chance to win $100 versus a 50% chance to win $40. In a study lead by James Cavanagh of Brown University, participants were asked several questions involving such difficult tradeoffs between payoffs and probabilities. Participants were paid according to their decisions—you can imagine that they thought really hard about which options to choose! The researchers found that the harder the decision—that is, the more difficult the trade-off was between the different choices—the more participants' pupils were dilated. Our pupils get bigger as choices get harder.

The eyes can also tell us if we experience something unpleasant. In a 1999 study, Chapman and colleagues at the University of Washington administered a painful stimulation to the fingers of 20 participants.

> Participants rated this pain on a scale from “tolerable” to “intolerable.” The more intolerable the stimulation was rated, the larger participant’s pupils were. Although experiencing pain is very different from looking at semi-nude pictures, it elicits a similar pupil response. Taken together, this suggests that pupil size reflects the strength of feelings, rather than whether those feelings are positive or negative. Therefore, to deduce whether someone is feeling good or bad, we need to consider the context of the situation in addition to their eyes.
>
> Does this mean that we can read everything from the eyes, and that the eyes are the only signal we should attend to? When making a high-stakes decision—such as whether someone was guilty of a crime—we should not rely on pupil dilation alone to make our judgment. It is without a doubt that our “mind-reading capabilities” depend on the context. Generally, you might be better at reading your beloved ones’ eyes compared to strangers’, because you can tell their regular facial expressions from a surprised one. Converging evidence is the key to help us make better assessments of others’ feelings. But because people can’t change how their pupils react, the eyes are an essential and often under-used source of information that can help us create better bonds with those around us.
>
> It might not be possible to read a person’s *exact* thoughts from just looking at their eyes. This is great—because from the perspective of the observed, the privacy of thoughts is maintained. But eyes tell us much more than we sometimes assume—and our eyes, unlike our mouths, cannot lie.

What is the “single” eye and the “evil” eye that the Lord mentions? First though let us look at the question of “where the light is coming from”. In the article we read, the light was coming from within, so that the eye was revealing something about us. Jesus is also revealing something about us from the eye, but this time it is the external light which reveals it, *Luk 11:34 The light **of the body** is the eye.* It refers to the light going in and lightening the body.

The candle on the lampstand shines its light into the whole room, but the eye may see the light or it may not see it depending upon the condition of the eye, *Luk 11:34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, **thy whole body also is full of light**; but when thine eye is evil, **thy body also is full of darkness**.*

Lets try a different translation to see if it makes the message clearer, *Luk 11:33 No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a clay pot. A lamp is put*

on a lampstand, so that everyone who comes into the house can see the light. Luk 11:34 Your eyes are ***the lamp for your body****. When your eyes are good, you have all the light you need. But when your eyes are bad, everything is dark. Luk 11:35 So be sure that your light isn't darkness. Luk 11:36 If you have light, and nothing is dark, then light will be everywhere, as when a lamp shines brightly on you*. CEV.

The "*eyes are* ***the lamp for your body****"*. So then, we have two "lights", the one which is put on the lampstand, and the other, the one which enlightens your body, the lamp for your body. The light on the stand shines through the eye and into the body and so lights up the whole body. Well almost, except there are two types of eye, the one "evil" and the other "single". Looking at the meaning of the words we have,

> " *If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."* "Single" and "evil" here represent haplouis, and poneros. Poneros elsewhere in the New Testament means "wicked"; haplous occurs only here in the New Testament, but is very common in ordinary Greek and always has the meaning "simple." But in view of the context, most commentators take haplous here as meaning "normal," "healthy," and poneros as "diseased," so rendering, "Just as physical enlightenment depends on the condition of the eye, so does spiritual enlightenment depend on the condition of the heart."
>
> This is natural enough, but it is not satisfactory, as it gives to haplous a unique sense and to poneros a sense unique in the 73 New Testament examples of the word. Moreover, the same expression, "evil eye," is found also in Matthew 20:15; Mark 7:22, where it means "jealousy" or "covetousness." With poneros = "covetous", haplous would = "generous"; and this rendition gives excellent sense in Matthew, where the further context deals with the love of money.
>
> Yet in Luke it is meaningless, where the context is of a different sort, a fact perhaps indicating that Luke has placed the saying in a bad context. Or the Greek translation of Christ's words used by Matthew and Luke may have taken the moral terms haplous and poneros to translate physical terms ("healthy" and "diseased"?) employed in the original Aramaic. The Sinaitic Syriac version of Luke 11:36 may perhaps contain a trace of an older rendering.

Whatever the arguments for the meaning of "evil" and "single", I think that the context gives it. It is a tale of two types of eyes. One is not normal, hence evil.

One is normal, hence single, without aberration, pure, or good. The eyes are either good or fit for purpose or they are not. They look at an object, and if their eye is good, the whole of the body is full of light, enlightened by it, and they take it all in, they understand it. If their eye is bad, the light cannot get in, and the object cannot be seen properly and so we may say that the body is not enlightened and is in consequence, in darkness.

Why does Jesus say this? Jesus has been discussing the "sign of Jonah", the only sign that He gave, and you may have wondered why it was that they did not see the meaning of it. Was there something wrong with them? Yes, there was, as Jesus explains. It was all down to their eye problem. It was down to the fact that those who couldn't see Jesus, the Light of the World, were blind. The light never entered into them because their eye was diseased and they remained in darkness.

Paul put it this way, *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*.

There is another thing which comes out of this and it is the follow on from this personal enlightenment from Jesus, who is the light, *Joh 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*. What happens when Jesus goes from the world? No problem, for He has made provision for such a contingency. Jesus had left His disciples the task, *Mat 5:14 **Ye are the light of the world**. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*.

Jesus lets His disciples light the world. But they would have to have the haploid eye, the single eye, the pure eye, otherwise the message would not get through from Jesus, it would be garbled, which in some instances it most surely is.

104. Washing up *Luke 11:37 - 41*

Luk 11:37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. Luk 11:38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. Luk 11:39 And the Lord

said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Luk 11:40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? Luk 11:41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

In Matthews Gospel we read, *Mat 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. Mat 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*

In Mark we read, *Mar 7:2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. Mar 7:3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. Mar 7:4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Mar 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands*?

I have included the related verses in Matthew and Mark because they expand upon the subject. Luke says the Pharisee marvelled that He had not washed His hands before eating. Matthew says it was a part of their tradition that it transgressed, and thus it went against the Law of God. Mark adds that they were always doing it, and that they did other washings, such as cups, pots, metal vessels and tables.

The word for wash that Mark uses (7 v 4) is “baptise” and in Luke’s account, Jesus is accused of not “baptising” (washing) His hands. As we suggested elsewhere, baptism was a ritual washing, *Luk 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come*? Washings were a frequent and common thing amongst the Jews, and they often used the mikveh as a ritual bath. In Judaism, ritual washing, or ablution, takes two main forms. Tevilah (**טְבִילָה**) is a full body immersion in a mikveh, and netilat yadayim is the washing of the hands with a cup.

The conception of personal cleanliness as both a prerequisite of holiness and an aid to physical fitness, is central to Jewish tradition, as this article in Early Church Tradition points out,

> Cleansing with water for physical as well as spiritual purity was commanded in the Old Testament. Moses bathed Aaron and his sons

> before their ordination as priests. (Leviticus 8:6) Clothing contaminated by mould or mildew had to be washed. (Leviticus 13:58) A diseased, unclean person had to be quarantined outside the camp until the infection ceased. (Leviticus 13:45,46) When the disease was gone, the person had to "wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water." (Leviticus 14:8) Diarrhea and urethral discharges meant disease, uncleanness and the ill person as well as all those around him had to wash their clothes and "bathe in fresh (running) water." (Leviticus 15:13) Semen and menstrual blood were unclean and required water cleansing (Leviticus 15:16-33). The seemingly tedious lists in Leviticus of "clean" and "unclean" that required water cleansing were in reality prescient medical methods of preventing the spread of infectious diseases as well as practical practices that reinforced the need to be "clean" outside. To be clean outside was a metaphor for inward, spiritual purity.
>
> The Jews were, of all ancient peoples, the most aware of how sinful, how unclean they were before their God and how much they needed to be cleansed from their sins.

In another article, "Bathing in the Hebrew Bible" it says,

> To us, bathing may seem like a mundane activity. But in biblical Israel, where water was scarce, bathing was often a momentous event, fraught with religious significance.
>
> The Bible itself offers scant insight into when and how ancient Israelites might have bathed in the course of ordinary life, although archaeology helps fill out the picture somewhat. Generally, water would be poured from a jug over the bather's body, and this is probably how Bathsheba was washing herself when David saw her, perhaps using rainwater collected on her roof. Israelites do not generally seem to have had bathtubs, although a bathtub was found at a ninth-century B.C. religious site at Tel Dan, and a clay figurine of a woman in a small, shallow tub was discovered in an eighth or seventh century B.C. Phoenician tomb. A metaphorical reference in Jeremiah (Jer 2:22) attests to the use of soap-like substances, including natron and something called borit in Hebrew, probably made from wood or vegetable ashes.
>
> Biblical references to bathing suggest that it was often something of a special event. A woman, for example, might bathe before an amorous encounter. Ruth bathes and anoints herself with oil (a common practice

> to prevent dry skin) in preparation for a night time meeting with Boaz, during which she intends to persuade him to take her as a wife. Ezek 23:40 likewise describes a woman bathing and putting on makeup and jewellery before meeting her lovers. For royalty, bathing was probably more common. King David, after fasting and praying for God to spare his son, bathes and anoints himself when his son dies (2Sam 12:20). These acts indicate that the king has resumed normal life, since, he observes, nothing he can do now, will bring the child back.

Jesus observed however, **there is no law in the bible that states we have to wash our hands before eating**. This was an "add on" by the Pharisees. But you would not like somebody with unwashed hands to serve you in the deli, or on the meat counter, or in a restaurant, especially if they had just been to the toilet, or had just blown their nose. You might insist that the person wash their hands thoroughly.

But although rudimentary hygiene was understood by Jews, a lot of the hazards were not known. Postpartum infections, also known as childbed fever and puerperal fever, are any bacterial infections of the female reproductive tract following childbirth or miscarriage. The history of this disease is interesting.

> Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis was a Hungarian) physician and scientist (1818 – 1865), who was an early pioneer of antiseptic procedures. Described as the "saviour of mothers", he discovered that the incidence of puerperal fever (also known as "childbed fever") could be drastically reduced by requiring hand disinfection in obstetrical clinics.
>
> He could offer no theoretical explanation for his findings of reduced mortality due to hand-washing, and some doctors were offended at the suggestion that they should wash their hands and mocked him for it. In 1865, the increasingly outspoken Semmelweis allegedly suffered a nervous breakdown and was committed to an asylum by his colleagues. In the asylum he was beaten by the guards. He died 14 days later from a gangrenous wound on his right hand that may have been caused by the beating. His findings earned widespread acceptance only years after his death, when Louis Pasteur confirmed the germ theory, giving Semmelweis' observations a theoretical explanation, and Joseph Lister, acting on Pasteur's research, practised and operated using hygienic methods, with great success.

I think that he was a very brave man with the courage of his convictions and he did good observational science. Most people knowing this history would be as offended as the Pharisees at Jesus not washing His hands and they would turn on

Him and say, do you mind, would you please mind washing your hands for the sake of cleanliness?

I do not think Jesus for a moment would offend anyone over cleanliness, but this is something different, it is not about cleanliness, it is about tradition, and Jesus will chop the tree of man's tradition down to the root. These fools, for so Jesus calls them, are so into their human tradition that it has become equal to God's word. We have seen that elsewhere, where in today's made up worship, they seamlessly go from the scripture to tradition, not even stopping to draw breath. If the traditions of men are so wonderful, in the past and through all ages, then why doesn't God say to you and I that they are obligatory on us? Because they are not, that's why.

Thank God we are free in Jesus to worship Him in simplicity, not with the casuistry of man. You see how Jesus had just been talking of light and darkness, and here it is illustrated. Men who would be Jewish but men who through the long years of Israel, have sunk down into spiritual darkness, have become the very people that Jesus spoke of, for whom the light had become darkness.

It is therefore very surprising to see Jesus invited for a meal at the Pharisees table since there was an antagonism between the two parties, but not all of them, and He had other invitations, *Luk 7:39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner*. The Pharisees sought after Him and were keen to know His teachings, *Joh 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*.

What Jesus says to the Pharisee, is what He could say to all of us, to me and you, so do not marginalise the Pharisees when you read this. The superstitions, the habits of the past, the traditions of men all reside in us, and they all cling in certain measure. We are not given over to the word, or to Jesus, as long as we hold certain things dear, certain practices which we still do consciously or not, thinking we are honouring God in doing them.

Things like, for example, some Christians make the sign of the cross, thinking that it makes them more close to God. The CoE says that, "making the sign of the cross is a tangible way to mark ourselves as Christ's. Crossing yourself or someone else is an act of *sanctification*, a physical reminder that you/they are set apart as holy for Christ". I wonder what Jesus would have said to such people? "Oh, you go on doing it, it is flattering that you show such devotion to me, never

mind the fact that you don't do half of what I tell you. This invention of piety, although it has nothing to do with my teachings, is really a sign that you are humbling yourself, and showing the world that you are mine". No, that is **not** what He says in Luke.

You see, the way that we wash the outside of our lives, appear to people to be religious, but inside of us we are rotten, *Luk 11:39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness*. That is where we have the great work of God, to do.

The way that showed that we say that "we belong to Jesus", is not in the way that we outwardly conform to religious ideas, it is how we are doing it on the inside. The baptism of the "cups and plates", showed a desire for cleanness, but it did not extend much beyond that, *Luk 11:39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter;* ***but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness***.

Baptism can equally be seen as the baptism of "the cups and plates". We get into arguments about whether it is right to christen children, or whether we should baptise adults only, and whether we should sprinkle water over them or immerse them. Seldom do we come across discussions about "Why should we be baptised?"

Baptism, or as I have elsewhere called it, "washing", is not an outward act only. It doesn't save you by washing the dirt off, by cleansing the outside of "the cups and the plates", as Peter said, *Pe 3:21 Baptism, which is like that water, now saves you. Baptism doesn't save by removing dirt from the body. Rather, baptism is a request to God for a clear conscience. It saves you through Jesus Christ, who came back from death to life*. GW.

Baptism, washing, was to show God that we had truly repented of our old lives. We know that there is nothing we can do about our sin, no fuller, no soap "on earth can white them". We appeal to God that we may be truly washed, and that is a sign of our clear conscience. We hold nothing back from Him and give our lives to Him.

Washing the outside is something that we get used to, but washing the insides doesn't happen. We consider ourselves right in all we do, never once examining ourselves. But God put something inside of us, something that can prompt us for good or evil. A sort of sounding board inside of us and it is called the conscience.

The conscience may work well, *Act 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all* ***good conscience*** *before God*

until this day. The conscience may be bad, *Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an **evil conscience**, and our bodies washed with pure wate*r. Clearly from that verse you can change your conscience, have it cleansed.

Conscience will react according to your nature, so it will depend a lot on how you exercise it. Paul exercised his daily, *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men*.

When Peter says, *1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a **good conscience** toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*: he says it is the good conscience which speaks to God.

That leaves us to answer, “have I got a good consciences or an evil conscience?” Where you gravitate, where your moral compass takes you, will determine how sincere you are. Whether you wash the outside of the cup or whether you wash the inside of the cup is known only to you. You should check whether your conscience is working to bring you life or whether it will bring death.

It is time to take the conscience for a walk.

105. Things not done *Luke 11:40 - 44*

Luk 11:40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? Luk 11:41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. Luk 11:42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Luk 11:43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Luk 11:44 Woe unto you, lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

The Pharisee had not appreciated an important point, and it relates to **the continuity of manufacture**. You just can’t pick and choose the parts that you want, because it suits your argument and neglect the other parts that do not suit your argument, when they clearly have the same source of manufacture. You cannot wash the outside of the cup and leave the inward unwashed because it

suits you, especially when they have the same manufacturer, *Luk 11:40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?*

That is also true of mindless, chance evolution, because if you have information, such as DNA, it cannot be the result of chance. Information is the product of intelligence. You cannot have your cake and eat it. To say there is evolution and to deny the creator is washing the outside of the cup and neglecting the inside, and evolution is a pharisaic religion as much as any other religion.

So we might think from this passage that all you have to is give alms and then its alright, we are clean and all things are clean to us. Of course, this fails to recognise that whatever we have is from the Lord, and we are just manipulating it and passing it on. And although it is right to be charitable, give alms, the giving of alms will not save your immortal soul without a transformation, brought about by Christ and the new birth. So this is not the full story.

What is almsgiving? The Greek ἐλεημοσύνη = eleēmosunē comes from ἔλεος = eleos, mercy or compassion. In other words it is compassion for genuine need. The McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia says regarding Jewish Alms-giving,

> The regulations of the Mosaic law respecting property, and the enjoining of a general spirit of tender-heartedness, sought to prevent destitution and its evil consequences. The law in this matter is found in Lev 25:35: "*And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee, then shalt thou relieve him*;" and it is liberally added, "*yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee*."
>
> The consideration by which this merciful enactment is recommended has peculiar force, "I *am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God*." The spirit of the Hebrew legislator on this point is forcibly exhibited in Deu 15:7 *"If there be among you a poor man ... thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him ... Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him naught; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works*."
>
> The great antiquity of the practice of benevolence toward the poor is shown in *Job 29:13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.* How high the esteem was in which this virtue continued to be held in the time of the Hebrew monarchy may be learnt from Ps 41:1: "*Blessed is he that*

considereth the poor; the Lord will remember him in time of trouble" (comp. Ps 112:9; Pr 14:31).

The progress of social corruption, however, led to the oppression of the poor, which the prophets, after their manner, faithfully reprobated, *Isa 58:3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours* where, among other neglected duties, the Israelites are required to deal their bread to the hungry, and to bring the outcast poor to their house (comp. Isa 10:2; Am 2:7; Jer 5:28; Eze 22:29).

However favourable to the poor the Mosaic institutions were, they do not appear to have wholly prevented beggary; for the imprecation found in Ps 109:10, *"Let his children be vagabonds and beg,*" implies the existence of beggary as a known social condition. Begging naturally led to almsgiving, though the language of the Bible does not present us with a term for "alms" till the period of the Babylonish captivity, during the calamities attendant on which the need probably introduced the practice (Gesenius, Carm. Samar. p. 63).

In *Dan 4:27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.* , we find the Chald. word **צִדקָה** (tsidkah'; lit. righteousness), rendered ἐλεημοσύναι in the Septuagint, and the ensuing: member of the sentence puts the meaning beyond a question: "*O king, break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.*"

A new idea is here presented, namely, that of merit and purchase. Alms-giving had come to be regarded as a means of conciliating God's favour and of warding off evil. At a still later period this idea took a firm seat in the national mind, and alms deeds were regarded as a mark of distinguished virtue (Tobit 2:14; 4:11). That begging was customary in the time of the Saviour is clear from Mk *10:46," Blind Bartimaeus sat by the wayside begging;"* and *Ac 3:2, "A lame man was laid daily at the gate of the temple called Beautiful to ask alms"* (comp. ver. 10). And that it was usual for the worshippers, as they entered the temple, to give relief, appears from the context, and particularly from the fine answer to the lame man's entreaty made by the Apostle Peter.

From the Jewish perspective, from the perspective of a child of the covenant, one who supposedly had a relationship with Jehovah, the giving of Alms, whatever that might consist of, was the act which "cleansed" them, not the act which brought them into a relationship with God. The poor waited at the temple for alms, which consisted of things other than money, *Act 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk*. It defined the Jew, for the true Jew was truly charitable, and as we have seen, in the story of the Samaritan, in Chapter 10 of Luke, just before this, the Samaritans act of compassion singled him out as the neighbour.

Let us not forget that this dialogue comes as Jesus goes to dinner with the lawyers and Pharisees. Whatever the genuineness or not, of their invitation, it was still an act which required some social politeness, decorum, but our Lord tells it like it is, and that is what He thinks of social graces. There is no time to waste with politeness, because His time is short and their habits must be corrected. Having made one correction of their behaviour, He now proceeds to make another and He pronounces a series of "Woes" upon them.

What are "woes"? Woe means "grief, anguish, affliction, wretchedness, calamity, or trouble." The Dictionary of Bible Themes categorizes the uses of the word woe in the Bible: "Woe as an exclamation of judgment on others," "Woe as an exclamation of misfortune on oneself," "Woe as an exclamation of sadness over others," and "Woe may give way to forgiveness, comfort, and deliverance" (Manser, M., ed., Zondervan, 1999).

Sometimes in the Bible, the suffering person has brought about his or her own woeful condition as a natural result of foolish choices *Pro 23:29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? Pro 23:30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.* More often, woe is tied to sin and rebellion against God, and the resulting judgments are referred to as "woes." In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces seven "woes" on the hypocrites of His day and in Revelation, a group of God's final judgments on mankind are called the three "woes."

I do not think that Jesus is setting out these woes upon the men of His day, because He does not care for them, or because He is glad that they are getting their "come upance" or because they have no hope. I think that He is genuinely concerned that they change their ways, and because of this He uses strong language.

It is a lesson for us, *Eze 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?* To do this sometimes requires direct speech. Not the gentle words, so that you do not offend the person. If you treat people like that, they will think it is alright to behave the way that they do. If you are concerned for them, if you really believe that they are lost, you will tell them the truth. If a person has a terminal disease, and you know it, you are unkind if you keep them from the cure. You are as bad as they are, because you have no regard for truth.

So Jesus tells them there error. Yes, they are right to tithe herbs, and that is written in the law, although the Law does not mention them specifically, they are part of the offering to God, coming under the heading of, *Lev 27:30 And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD*.

I wonder how many of those Christians, who put so much emphasis of keeping the Tithe going, ever consider this? Of course money is what gets the attention, particularly of that get rich quick brigade of prosperity teachers, but not the trivial little herbs. Thank God we have been absolved of this law, because it would make vegetable and herb gardening a nightmare, parcelling up the minute little bunches of our increase. Those modern "tithers" could be equally attacked by Jesus for doing the weightier matters, tithing of "money" and neglecting the tithe of herbs.

There is a lesson in this for US as well as the lawyers and Pharisees, *Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*. Christians, do you think that you are not included in this too, that you can do what you please with God's word and that you are exempt total obedience, because you say that Christ has died? *Heb 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace*?

We all fall foul of the Law, lawyers, Pharisees and Christians and it is only by being under the blood of Christ do we have a hope of eternal life.

They had forgotten the weightier matters of the law and concentrated on the issues which could be seen by other men, such as tithing herbs, but they neglected the unseen things, "*judgment and the love of God".* These are rooted in the soul of man, and they cannot be faked before God. Of course you can make an outward show to man with no inner sincerity, you can say, "I love you", you can say, "I believe in the law", but inwardly you have no sincerity. You have become a religious actor, a hypocrite.

You have come to like the trappings of men, the religion of the world. The humanistic religion loves to make a show, it loves to make itself different from ordinary men. It dresses itself up, it wears collars, it has ranks and titles that God did not give to men and it calls itself Christianity. It loves the chief seats so that people will know we are better and they will look upon us and up to us. It loves the greetings by which we are recognised, and everybody buys into this falsehood because we love it.

But God says of us, "*hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them".* Dead religion housed in a grave, but it looks good on the outside, it looks pristine, whitewashed as a sepulchre. Ultimately you are like the graves which in time are lost and overgrown, which *"men that walk over them are not aware of them".*

Sound familiar to you? We love to point at the lawyers and Pharisees as being out of tune to the faith of Christ, but if we took a step back and looked at ourselves with the same critical judgement, we find ourselves standing shoulder to shoulder with them. I do not think that this section with its rebuke to those men, is for them alone, they are merely used as illustrations of the general problem. They bring out the message very clearly through this illustration, but they are not alone in their hypocrisy, for what they do we do also in some measure. They are the caricatures of us, perhaps greatly distorted but true of us also.

I have mentioned before, how we love to see people doing worse than ourselves, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed* ***thus with himself****, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Luk 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. Luk 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. How wicked and deceitful our heart is to us. Because there is someone in a worse condition than us, we are happy that we are the righteous ones, instead of saying "there but for the grace of God go I".

As we go on in the faith, I think that the picture of ourselves gets blacker and blacker. We scarcely need a Saviour at the start of our journey, we are so righteous, but the more we see ourselves in the mirror of Scripture, the more abominable we become. Like the picture of Dorian Gray, sins shows us in our true light. The more we go on in the faith, the more we need a Saviour, we must have a Saviour or else we die, and there is nothing we can do of ourselves that even resembles a good work.

Those poor Pharisees are mere beginners in the faith. They cannot see the importance of Christ and they are to be pitied for the object lesson that they give. They are object lessons for us, the Christian.

We love the outward applause of men, we love to be applauded for doing the minutiae of the law, remembering we think, to tithe anise, mint and cumin, but we, like them, pass over on major judgements of the law. We like to have recognition for what we do, we like being given the best seats so that we are seen above our fellow man, we like to recognised and greeted in public. What are we though when we have passed but hidden graves, full of dead men's bones, trampled over and not even recognised any more. We have faded from the memory that we tried so hard to cultivate.

It is better to be remembered by God than man and how wonderful to have it said of us, **"Known unto God".**

106. The lawyers *Luke 11:45 - 48*

Luk 11:45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. Luk 11:46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Luk 11:47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Luk 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

We move from the woes of the Pharisees to the woes of the lawyers. If I was to make a difference between the two it would be that the Pharisees were the people who put the "laws" into practice and the lawyers were the ones who made the "laws" for them to practice. Lawyers (νομικός), in its general sense, denotes one skilled in the law, as in *Tit 3:13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them*.

When, therefore, one is called a lawyer, this is understood with reference to the laws of the land in which he lived, or to which he belonged. Hence among the Jews a lawyer was one versed in the laws of Moses, which he taught in the schools and synagogues *Luk 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and*

tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? . The same person who is called 'a lawyer' in these texts is in the parallel passage, called 'a scribe' (γραμματεύς), *Mar 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?* It has been inferred that the functions of the lawyers and the scribes were nearly identical.

The lawyer comes to Jesus and says to Jesus, “do you reproach us also?” What Jesus had said to the Pharisee was a bit too close to the mark, and he was feeling uncomfortable over it. He calls Jesus “master” in the KJV, but that is a poor translation.

I want to say a few words about translations before I go on, as this has come up in conversation recently. There are many possible sources of error that can come into Scripture, but this one seem to rob us of the truth, or at least mask it more than others.

Why did they use the word master? It was from the mid-14 century, "one who employs another or others in his service" (in which sense the correlative word was *servant*, *man*, or *apprentice*); also "owner of a living creature" (a dog, a horse, also, in ancient contexts a slave); paired with *slave* in the legal language of the American colonies by 1705 in Virginia. In academic sense it was, "one who has received a specific degree" (translating Medieval Latin *magister*) and from mid-13 century, originally "one who has received a degree conveying authority to teach in the universities;" ***master's degree***, originally a degree giving one authority to teach in a university, is from late 14 century.

I have no doubt that the academic role was on the minds of the translators, and Jesus was accorded this position. Why not just call Him “teacher”, which is a translation of didaskalos, instead of master? In John’s gospel, didaskalos is translated “teacher” and not “master”, *Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art **a teacher** come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* Teacher elsewhere in the gospels is translated master, which in my view is not today’s usage.

Master is also the translation of the word kyrios or despotes in the epistles, *Col 4:1 **Masters (κύριος)**, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a **Master (κύριος)**, in heaven……2Ti 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the **master's (δεσπότης)** use, and prepared unto every good work*.

No distinction is made between the words for “master”. It may have been better to translate it “teacher” in the gospels or even to have transliterated it, that is take the Greek letters across to English, and render it ”didaskalos”, to give the meaning the gospel writer had. Another word which hides its meaning is baptize, *Luk 11:38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first* ***washed (βαπτίζω)*** *before dinner*. If they used “washed” there, why not translate it wash elsewhere and not baptise? This has led to the churches using the transliteration when they think it means the church ritual of Baptism but otherwise it is wash. But who says that that view is correct? If they had kept it consistent, we should have translated it “wash” or transliterated it baptism.

So in Luke’s Gospel Jesus is called **master** when He is a teacher, and He doesn’t wash his hands He **baptises** His hands! Confused, so am I. Our text shows that the lawyer recognised however that Jesus was a teacher like himself, though not quite the same. This teacher, the lawyer was happy to invent teachings, which incidentally the Pharisees were only too pleased to perform, but the lawyers did not help anyone to do the things that they taught. It was not like “Judaism for Dummies”, where the lawyers wrote a guide to doing the laws which they dreamed up, and they offered no help whatsoever.

The first woe to them is, “*Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers”*. They were interested in laws, doctrines, but it seems they had no interest in the personal application of them to the individual.

I remember in the early days of my faith, reading the great doctrines of the bible, Theology proper. Doctrine of God the Father, Bibliology (Doctrine of the Bible), Doctrine of Man, Angelology (Doctrine of Angels), Hamartiology (Doctrine of sin), Soteriology (Doctrine of salvation}, Christology (Doctrine of Christ), Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church), Pneumatology (The doctrine of the Holy Spirit), and many more.

We would sit there for hours and argue about the finer points of the doctrines, and sometimes it would spill over into arguments, and sometimes it would even lead to splits. I can see where the denominations come from. We were the men, the lawyers. We got great pleasure out of our studies but we did little to help others in the faith to understand them or the practical implications of them, or what you could practically do if you had knowledge of the doctrine.

None of this was done in love, and consequently we were tinkling cymbals, all noise and no substance, *1Co 13:1 What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels? If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 1Co 13:2 What if I could prophesy and understand all*

secrets and all knowledge? And what if I had faith that moved mountains? I would be nothing, unless I loved others. CEV. It made us, in our own eyes very learned men but that was in our own eyes, and I wonder how much Christ groaned about how little of Christianity we had absorbed? He let us go on our way heedless of the fact that we had become those lawyers, those who never lifted a finger to help another human and we were more interested in what we thought we knew.

I do not say it is wrong to learn doctrines, *2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*. The doctrines are essential, but where they do not reprove us, where they do not correct us, where they do not instruct us in righteousness, where do they perfect us and furnish us with good works, of what value are they?

These teachings of the lawyers became burdensome to men, “oppressive burdens”, burdens that made religion a hardship instead of a pleasure, except to the perverse Pharisees of course. The lawyers almost did it deliberately, to make men unhappy, to trap them on a treadmill of useless confusing works, until they were made more fit for hell, *Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*.

Then Jesus utters a second woe, *Luk 11:47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Luk 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres*.

These lawyers build the sepulchres of the prophets but their fathers killed the prophets, as Matthew comments, *Mat 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, Mat 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Mat 23:31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets*.

This sheds a little more light on what is being said. The lawyers, and by implication the scribes and Pharisees, built the tombs of the Prophets. The tombs of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are on the way from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, near the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was betrayed.

They erected these in tribute to the old prophets, and garnished them, set them in order. They clearly held them, or more particularly, their dead bodies, in high esteem.

They were in effect saying that, "*If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets".* We would have supported the prophets, loved them and done what they said. But the fact that they had admitted this fact, that their fathers had killed the prophets, they were witnessing that they had equal guilt to their fathers by association.

They tried to hold their fathers in honour while at the same time holding the prophets in honour, and the two things were incompatible. Do we Christians have the same attitude? How do we view our worldly fathers? Do we hold their non-Christian views, their anti-Christian views, their lack of any submission to Christ, which in turn shaped our formative years, such that we ran contrary to Christ, do we hold this in respect? Do we try to juggle the same views of the scribes, and hold both before our eyes in equal value? Christ and our fathers?

I am not saying our fathers were careless and uncaring, and that they did not provide the things of this world for us, they most surely did according to their ability. But the thing that they neglected, the most important thing, was to get us, their offspring, security in the eternal life through a knowledge of Jesus. Like the scribes, we hold our fathers in honour for killing Christ and at the same time we build monuments to Christ. Can we not see the hypocrisy in this position? Our world view is confused and we hold to opposing things. We honour our past and all the darkness of it and we try to secure the bright future in Christ with the same thinking.

The prophets were given to be the voice of God to the people and it was not a career of choice, for they often ended up dead. They had as their model "a prophet like unto me", Christ Himself, *Deu 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; Deu 18:16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. Deu 18:17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. Deu 18:19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. Deu 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. Deu 18:21 And if*

thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

God did not communicate with the whole nation on an individual level, although Moses wished it so, *Num 11:29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them*! I suppose that God didn't have everyone a prophet, because it avoided confusion, and His message would have many forms. He generally had one prophet.

The prophets were the people that the Pharisees, lawyers and scribes had killed, so that there teachings would have precedence, and they would not be slaughtered by the prophets words, *Hos 6:5 That's why I slaughtered you with the words of my prophets. That's why my judgments blazed like the dawning sun. Hos 6:6 I'd rather for you to be faithful and to know me than to offer sacrifices……Act 7:41 Then they made an idol in the shape of a calf. They offered sacrifices to the idol and were pleased with what they had done. Act 7:42 God turned his back on his people and left them. Then they worshiped the stars in the sky, just as it says in the Book of the Prophets, "People of Israel, you didn't offer sacrifices and offerings to me during those forty years in the desert. Act 7:43 Instead, you carried the tent where the god Molech is worshiped, and you took along the star of your god Rephan. You made those idols and worshiped them. So now I will have you carried off beyond Babylonia."* CEV.

They rulers were only too pleased to kill the prophets as the men of today are. To kill the prophets is to silence the voice of God. Having done this they are at liberty to have whatever false religion they like. That is why they killed the prophets.

107. The world's religion *Luke 11:48 - 54*

Luk 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Luk 11:49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them Prophetsand apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: Luk 11:50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this

generation; Luk 11:51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. Luk 11:52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. Luk 11:53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Luk 11:54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

I closed last time with the thought that killing the Prophets silenced the voice of God and so enabled false religions, the religion of man, to flourish. The men who did this were not just the builders of the prophet's sepulchres but their killers also. I draw comparisons with the religions of our age that kill the Prophet Jesus. They kill Him by falsifying His claims. I give one such idea and you can find hundreds of others. This is an article headlined,

> **We must challenge belief in Jesus' physical resurrection, Anglican leader claims** (Jan 2019).
>
> Dr John Shepherd was appointed last week as interim director of the Anglican Centre in Rome. But his suitability for the role has been questioned after video footage emerged of him appearing to question the traditional Christian understanding of Christ being raised from the dead.
>
> During a sermon delivered in Easter 2008, he said: "The resurrection of Jesus ought not to be seen in physical terms, but as a new spiritual reality. "It is important for Christians to be set free from the idea that the resurrection was an extraordinary physical event which restored to life Jesus' original earthly body." The comments made when the Dr John was dean of St George's Cathedral in Perth, Western Australia, attracted criticism from the Anglican evangelical group Church Society.
>
> Dr John Shepherd continued: "...Jesus' early followers felt His presence after His death as strongly as if it were a physical presence and incorporated this sense of a resurrection experience into their gospel accounts. But they're not historical records as we would expect history to be written today; they are symbolic images of the breaking through of the resurrection spirit into human lives".
>
> Dr Stephen Platten, head of governors at the Anglican Centre in Rome told the newspaper Dr John Shepherd "emphatically believes in the resurrection of Jesus Christ". He added: "It's a matter of how one understands that."

“It's a matter of how one understands that”. Well, goodness me, after 2000 years, it is in doubt, according to this evil man. But the resurrection can only be understood as a historical event that is essential to salvation, as history attests, *Rom 4:24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*. It was a physical death and a physical resurrection.

It is foundational to the faith, *1Co 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 1Co 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 1Co 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished*. The resurrection must be a historical fact or faith is worthless. The statement of faith is given by Paul, *1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 1Co 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 1Co 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 1Co 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 1Co 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 1Co 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 1Co 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 1Co 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

When some jumped up Anglican prelate says something different, says that, “It is important for Christians **to be set free from the idea that the resurrection was an extraordinary physical event which restored to life Jesus' original earthly body**”, you know that he has not got the Spirit of Christ, and these are the words of the devil, and he is sitting with the scribes and Pharisees. When the Archbishop sends this man with his blessing to do “church work”, you know that the archbishop too is corrupt and he does satan’s work. You know that those who associate with him in the Anglican church are with him, as they say nothing against him. If they had wanted to censure Shepherd, they could have done so, but the anglican church does nothing as a whole. Shame on them!

This is an example of how men show their evil, *Luk 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.* These people are the very people that kill Jesus, today, and go about carrying on all the traditions and trappings of their father the devil about their necks. But the Lord does something remarkable, *Luk 11:49 Therefore also*

said the wisdom of God, I will send them Prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.

What or who is “the Spirit of God”? It is none other than the Holy Spirit, *Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*. The Wisdom of God is personal, and is the Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Father.

The counsel of the Godhead, in their infinite wisdom, decreed that there should be Prophets sent to this people Israel and the same Godhead decreed that some of them would be killed and persecuted, *Luk 11:50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; Luk 11:51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.*

This wise decree in sending the Prophets, was the way chosen by the Almighty, to bring man down to judgement in all generations. By rejecting the Prophets and wise men, each and every generation had rejected God. That does not only mean the physical rejection of the person of Christ, but everything Christ taught and stood for, *Joh 12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. Joh 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*. As we said last time, the Prophets stood for God.

The Prophets all pointed to Christ and Christ took over from them, *Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;* Now He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus.

Have you wondered why God does not intervene in our private lives when we do wrong, warn us, take the trouble to tell us of the consequences of a particular wrong that could send us to damnation? Well He does and He has. He has done so through the Prophets and their writing. An early illustration of this is with our mother Eve, who was warned by the voice of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or else. That was the warning she got, and the Lord being very serious about it, only gave it once, to show that He meant business when He gave a warning. Once is quite sufficient. Eve went on to commit the

original sin and God held His peace until the sin was complete, then He pronounced judgement.

God may seem quiet to us and the silence is taken as approval for all that we do. This is particularly true in the area of religion. It seems that you can do what you want and say what you want and God is silent. You can say things like that antichrist anglican Shepherd said, and it appears you get away with it. But it only appears that you get away with it. In reality, because God has already warned you, He appears to be silent, as He was with Eve.

The Scripture says, *2Pe 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 2Pe 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*. Those promises are found in Scripture, *Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*.

If you want to know what God has said, go to the Scripture. That book will tell us all of what God requires of us and what is additional to that, what men have invented for you to do, is not required. Paul says that all he gained, knowledge, position power that was not of Christ was dung, *Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but* ***dung****, that I may win Christ*, it is not vulgar to say it that he regarded life without Christ as shit. That may shock you, but that's the word Paul uses. Your life with out Christ stinks and if you do not know that you do not have the real Christ.

The blood of the Prophets, from Abel to Zacharias or Zechariah would be required of the generation which stood before Jesus. Abel and his death at the hand of Cain you know about, but Zechariah you may not, *2Ch 24:20 God's Spirit spoke to Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, and Zechariah told everyone that God was saying: "Why are you disobeying me and my laws? This will only bring punishment! You have deserted me, so now I will desert you." 2Ch 24:21 King Joash forgot that Zechariah's father had always been a loyal friend. So when the people of Judah plotted to kill Zechariah, Joash joined them and gave orders for them to stone him to death in the courtyard of the temple. As Zechariah was dying, he said, "I pray that the LORD will see this and punish all of you."* CEV.

Zechariah is chronologically the last of the martyrs. By that I mean that he was the last Prophet of the Old Testament, as far as his position in the books of the

Jewish bible is concerned. I remind you of the ancient name given to it, the TaNaC, the Torah, the Nevi'im, and the Ketuvim. The first five books of Moses, the Torah, the writings of the Prophets, the Nevi'im and the miscellaneous writings, the rest of the bits of Scripture called Ketuvim, or writings. The last book of the TaNaC, the last of the writings, the Ketuvim, is the book of Chronicles.

You have the Prophets Abel and Zechariah as the bookends of the OT. Jesus is telling the scribes and Pharisees that all of the OT, Abel to Zechariah the A to Z of Prophets, would rise in judgement upon them for their wicked behaviour.

You see the winnowing effect of the Prophets, not just at the last day but throughout history, separating the wheat from the chaff. Separating the false teachers from the true and separating false religion from true religion, and if you want the answer as to what is right and what is wrong, you just have to go to the Scripture.

The third woe comes. *Luk 11:52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. Luk 11:53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Luk 11:54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch* something *out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.*

As we have shown by their general behaviour and contempt for the Law, the lawyers in particular, had taken away the key of Knowledge. Not simply that they locked it up, but that they had taken the key with them. What these criminals did was to hinder the people going in as well, because they had locked the door to knowledge by their confused and blinded souls.

That was some dinner party that our Lord was invited to. He used the occasion to rebuke His hosts, to tear down their sacred shibboleths and to shake their world view. Did it get a response? It most certainly did. They started to get angry, terribly angry, trying to get Jesus to say something by which they could catch Him out, but they could not.

108. You shall be known *Luke 12: 1 - 3*

Luk 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Luk 12:2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Luk 12:3 Therefore whatsoever ye have

spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

Jesus moves from the scribes and Pharisees, to His inner circle of disciples, and a great buzzing crowd which could not be numbered. The people were treading on one another, presumably because they were straining to hear what Jesus said. He began to address His disciples, but what He had to say, openly, was for anyone's ears. Having spoken to the scribes and Pharisees, He turns to His disciples.

Jesus warns His disciples of the Pharisees, who He had just been rebuking, saying, "*Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* Jesus uses the phrase "leaven of the Pharisees" in Matthew in a slightly different scenario, *Mat 16:5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Mat 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the* ***leaven of the Pharisees*** *and of the Sadducees. Mat 16:7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Mat 16:8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Mat 16:9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Mat 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Mat 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should* ***beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*** *and of the Sadducees*?

The disciples thought that Jesus uttered the phrase, "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees", because they had forgotten to bring bread with them, but this was not the case. Jesus was not concerned with earthly bread, after all, He could make a super abundance of bread, bread to spare. The miracles of the loaves, feeding the five thousand and the four thousand, showed that bread was not the problem. Jesus could make bread.

It was a spiritual problem, and the disciples eventually see this. In fact it must have been so important as to say it twice, and though unwritten, for many other times. The leaven of the Pharisees was their hypocrisy.

Why was it called "leaven"? Paul says that you do not need a lot of yeast to work in bread, *1Co 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*? Yeasts are unicellular fungi reproducing asexually by budding or fission and sexually by spore formation. Currently more than 500 species of yeasts, belonging to around 50 genera, are known. The colony grows quickly, doubling in size every 90 minutes, and so it is a good analogy for something which grows unseen in some ones life*, Luk 13:20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? Luk 13:21 It is like leaven, which a*

woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. The action of yeast may be according to its type, since it is likened to the growth of the good Kingdom of Heaven or to the leaven of the Pharisees, which is bad.

The bad leaven of the Pharisees is insidious, proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with very harmful effects. At first it may seem harmless, but as it gets a hold on a man, it is so strong that he doesn't even know it has gripped him, and he becomes a master hypocrite. He finds ways to justify all of his actions which even if they are wrong, he thinks that they are right. He is delusional.

This is something that the disciples must be on guard against; The leaven of the Pharisees. It is like a disease that comes upon men who are careless about their hygiene. They do not wash at the fountain of Christ, but think that they can wash in the filthy waters of the world and be just as clean. Pharisaism is like leprosy, *2Ch 26:19 Uzziah, who held an incense burner in his hand, became angry. While he was angry with the priests, a skin disease broke out on his forehead. This happened in front of the priests in the LORD'S temple as Uzziah was at the incense altar. 2Ch 26:20 When the chief priest Azariah and all the priests turned toward him, a skin disease was on his forehead. They rushed him away. Uzziah was in a hurry to get out because the LORD had inflicted him with the disease. 2Ch 26:21 King Uzziah had a skin disease until the day he died. Since he had a skin disease, he lived in a separate house and was barred from the LORD'S temple. His son Jotham was in charge of the royal palace and governed the country*. GW.

King Uzziah presumed to burn incense before the Lord, which was unlawful for him, and for this arrogance and pride he was smitten with leprosy. He was unclean for what he did. Pharisaism is of a greater order than this, and is not just seen in pride and arrogance; it may be seen in all manner of works that go against God.

The Christian is not exempt or immune to this disease or why else would the Lord Jesus warn us disciples about it? We think that we are different from the Pharisees but there is that latent Pharisaism in all of us, like a virus, waiting to become active. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and He warns His disciples, because they have the seeds of Pharisaism in them. They are both predisposed to this grievous disease and though the disciples think that they are immune from it because of their association with Jesus, they are not.

When I became a Christian, I thought that I could change the world and was surprised at the near impossibility of this because people were not interested. I thought that by dressing more soberly, wearing a black suit to go to church on Sunday, by carrying my black bible with me, people would see that I was a

Christian and by this I could influence them. But soon I found that I had isolated myself from the very people that I would save, and I had come to a point of despising them for their ways because I could not influence them, and I began to think of myself as better than them, and like the Pharisees I had developed an attitude problem, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican*.

I found it hard to love my fellow man because the "leaven of the Pharisees" had eaten into me. Maybe the frustration that accompanied "banging my head" against the wall of the world's indifference to Christ, had made me bitter, and then hateful and despising of those suffering sinners? They were going to get what was coming to them and they deserved it. It was when I began to see that it is Christ's Kingdom, Christ the Master of all I surveyed, the One who I should be serving and not Him serving me, the One who made it all for His glory, not mine, that my attitude changed, and I saw that, *Zec 4:6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying,* ***Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts*****.**

Within a few short years of becoming a "Christian", I had done more to overthrow Christianity by my attitude, than an unbeliever. I see now that I was a hypocrite and the harm that I did to the cause of Christ was grievous. May God forgive me.

In fact the Christian must **beware** other things as well. *Mat 7:15* ***Beware of false prophets****, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*.

- *Mat 10:17 But* ***beware of men****: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;*
- *Mar 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of* ***the leaven of Herod****.*
- *Luk 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and* ***beware of covetousness****: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*
- *Luk 20:46* ***Beware of the scribes****, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;*

The word "beware" Προσέχω = prosechō means to be cautious about something, to apply oneself to, to adhere to, so it is like a command. It is not an option, and you disobey it at your peril. You may have thought your life was totally secure since you made that profession of faith, you may have thought you could just pay

lip service to Jesus and that His words no longer apply to us, but you are so mistaken, they do apply to us.

We have to beware of these things, no matter how nice the people seem to us, because our life depends on it. The decisions are down to us and the decisions we make as individuals to follow men, to follow scribes, to follow men in flowing robes, to follow the false prophet when you can find none of his teaching in the word, because your life depends on it. They will not be there to help you on the day of judgement, only you will be there, naked before the eyes of God.

Our passage continues, *Luk 12:2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.* **FOR** there is nothing hidden, nothing. It connects what has been said with what comes next. "**For"** is a preposition, meaning with the object or purpose of. "*Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. **For** there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known".* The secret hypocrisy of a man will lead to an open judgement upon the man.

It is a rather frightening thought that the innermost secrets that we keep inside of us will one day be broadcast from the roof tops. Privacy is **not** something that God will grant us, immunity from prosecution, immunity from knowing about us, a blackout of news about us, and a right to keep our personal information confidential. No, not before God. We are all of us an open book before God, and we shall be an open book to one another. God will never sign a non-disclosure act regarding the things we do, never, He will disclose everything to everyone.

Imagine that. What you really thought about me, what you said yourself in a deprecating way about me, and I did not know about it, but I will, because God will blow your cover. The lies that you told about me, the false gossip that you went on to repeat, will become known to every one. And the things I did, and concealed, my lies, the falsehoods that I uttered about other people, the things that I said behind their backs, God will make known, *Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* To the Christian, this must be accepted, because he is guilty as charged and by the grace of God, through Christ, we are spared the punishment of our crimes.

Will God embarrass us by revealing our misdemeanours? Will it be like people say when you die, "your whole life flashes before you", except you are at the judgement seat of Christ, and He replays your life to the world? I do not see why He should not do this, after all, it is the truth, whatever I did and God does not lie. It may help us to see just how much sin we really committed and how much we forgot. It will show us how far we have come away from this world. So it is quite

just to show the sins of the Christian. Why as a Christian would you hide it if it is forgiven? Do you still harbour guilty feelings?

When Jesus bore the sins of the world, He saw the sins of the world, *1Pe 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* He saw the sins against God that we don't even know were sins. He saw them and all their damaging consequences that spilled over into other lives, sometimes ruined as a consequence of us. Unlike us who only see this life, who are mortal, He sees down the ages, and He sees our sins as the impact on successive generations. If we do not see our sins and the consequences of them, from which He has delivered us, we do not know the fullness of His Salvation. Perhaps we will see our sin through His eyes and that will certainly shock us.

It is not just to our generation, the generation in which we live, but to all of humanity from Adam to the last man that this will be known. But that thought, I think, comes under the heading of biblical speculation, for, *1Co 13:12 Now we see a blurred image in a mirror. Then we will see very clearly. Now my knowledge is incomplete. Then I will have complete knowledge as God has complete knowledge of me.* GW.

It makes us consider our thoughts and words to our fellow man. The cruel, untrue, wicked, blasphemous, damming, injurious and unkind things we have said, and ought not to have said if only we had considered what we were doing. And it starts with the critical voice of satan, *Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face*.

The devil prompts us to do this and become hypocrites doing the very things we condemn, the things which shall be broadcast to the resurrected world. When men go down to Hell, wailing and gnashing their teeth, I think it is because God has given them the fullest remembrance of all their sin and the consequences of it. It has been proclaimed from the housetops.

109. No Fear Luke 12: 4 - 7

Luk 12:4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. Luk 12:5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Luk 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Luk 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

I am glad that our Lord says that I only die once but the possibility of a violent or painful demise fills most of us with terror. Spike Milligan, the comedian put it nicely, when he quipped, “I don’t mind dying, I just don’t want to be there when it happens”. Just before he died, Stan Laurel told his nurse he would like to go skiing. The nurse said, "Are you a skier, Mr Laurel?" He replied, "I'm not, but I'd rather be doing that than having these needles stuck in me". A few minutes later he died.

We Christians tend to be bold, even blasé when it comes to talking about death, perhaps because the Lord has removed the fear of death, *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*.

The other day, we had a neighbour over for lunch. She is 85 years old and has just been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Although she is fearful of life and growing old and fearing death, which she admits to, she will not even seek Christ. There is obviously a great divide between the Christian and the un-believer when it comes to the subject of dying.

Jesus warned us that it was not dying that was the problem, for we shall all die and some will cope better and some will cope worse. It is what happens next that really matters. This is the bad moment, the sum of all fears, Him who has the power over the second death, *Rev 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. Rev 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*.

We fast forward to that moment, before the judgement seat of Christ, where we have prepared our excuses, for a life lived in self indulgence and not for Christ. Then it is too late to do anything but make excuses and only two outcomes are possible, Heaven or hell. In that moment, when the masses of humanity go to

their allotted place, aren't you happy that Jesus kindly gave you this warning and better still, you heeded it, *Luk 12:5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

Jesus does not create a culture of "fear" about His disciples, *Luk 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Luk 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows*. God is at pains to calm us down when He makes a sudden unexpected appearance before us, *Mat 28:5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified*. He is solicitous about not causing us to fear.

But at this point and on this subject Jesus would literally put the fear of God in us. We may think that dying is bad enough, but what comes next is incomparable to it. The death of the body is one thing, but everlasting death is another, and it is to be avoided at all costs. This warning goes to all men, but especially to the disciples.

The disciples were not exempt this and because we think that a disciple is saved, we must think again, *Mat 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but* ***he that endureth to the end shall be saved***. Do not for a moment think that a disciple cannot fall, remember Judas? He was the only one Jesus lost while He was in the world, *Joh 17:12* ***While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name****: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled*.

What of the other disciples who were not Jesus companions, who lived in after years and have fallen in the history of the church? The seed that was sown in stony ground does not bear fruit but it looks good for a time*. Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. Joh 6:66* ***From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him****. Joh 6:67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?* Do not think that we can do as we want because we have made a profession of faith, we cannot.

The disciple must take this warning seriously and not shrug it off as being part of the story of Jesus in the Gospels, with no application for the Christian today. It has every application and the people of God must watch and come out of all that will corrupt them, for we must not be "a partaker of her sins", *Rev 18:3 For all*

nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ***Come out of her, my people,*** *that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities*.

Taking care of our soul is as important as taking care of our body, and if we spent as much time on our souls as we do pampering our bodies, we would see the truth of Jesus words. It is no harm and no self indulgence to go back over our life and visit our sins and ask forgiveness. It is good for us to know what we are really like, it is good to get our lives in perspective, and to see how vile we are and offensive to God. It is good to fear God, *Psa 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him*.

Familiarity is one of the things we have got wrong. It was true in the OT, as the presumptuous Aaron and Miriam found out, *Num 12:7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. Num 12:8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Num 12:9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.*

It is presumptuous in the NT, *Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*. There is nothing that could possibly be more shocking, as a human, than to stand before the Lord Jesus and hear Him say, “You thought you knew me”. “You thought I was like you”, *Isa 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isa 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*

Don’t be deceived that the Lord has gone soft and that we can get away with anything. He has not gone soft.

The Lord continues, *Luk 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Luk 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows*

It may surprise you how advanced Israel was in regard to looking after creatures, *Pro 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* Today we take it for granted that we care for animals, but it was not always so. It was William Wilberforce who, in 1824, founded the RSPCA (then SPCA). In 1829, the Metropolitan Police set up and used RSPCA uniforms for their inspectors, so the RSPCA pre-dated the Police. In 1884, the RSPCA Board helped set up the NSPCC, as they felt there needed to be a society protecting children from cruelty as well as animals and it met in 1886 in the RSPCA Boardroom. Obviously animals were considered more important than children up to that time!

God cares for the least of His creation, the things we give little thought about. Cruelty and kindness though do not exist in an evolutionary world, only utility, something to be used. If the world looks to adopt such things as kindness and compassion, but remind them that they stole those ideas from God as they do other ideas. I was watching the Prince of Wales Earth shot prize. They want to save the planet from catastrophe. Why, I ask? You do not believe in a God, you believe in evolution, well let it evolve, and come to and end, instead of intervening. The evolutionist is both inconsistent and contradictory in his views.

In Matthews Gospel it is slightly different, possibly because it was given on another occasion before the disciples went on their evangelistic campaign, *Mat 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father*. This brings into view something from the OT, *Lev 14:3 And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; Lev 14:4 Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed* ***two birds*** *alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop*:

Cleansing from leprosy was more than affordable. The cost of two sparrows, for that is the word **צִפּוֹר** = ziphor, which incidentally is the root of Zipporah, Moses wife. Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, who would have understood this.

Luke gives a discounted version of the sale of the sparrows and instead of 2 sparrows for 1 “farthing”, it is 5 sparrows for 2 “farthings”. In Matthew Jesus is giving them an assurance that they are precious in God’s eyes as they go out evangelising. In Luke, Jesus is telling the disciples that if they are expendable in this life it does not mean that God has forgotten them. Even the hairs of their head had been numbered in God’s books.

If the audience were people of this generation, Jesus might have said something different. He might have said “even your Chromosomes are stored”. How comforting is this, that the things which make me, the platform on which my soul

exists are for ever safe with God, where there is no hacker that can get at it. Why do I believe that? Because He made man in the beginning and put together that elegant programme, into which He breathed the breath of Life. No man has ever come remotely close to making life and never will, for although the code of life may be tampered with, the spark which makes life comes from God.

This is both a comfort for Christians and a warning is for all men. Men see the body in the grave as the end to all life and they believe what they see. When our body has decayed to dust, when it has dissolved into the dirt you came from, when all trace is apparently gone, remember this. "*Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him".* Almighty God will bring us back to face His tribunal, to come face to face with Christ our nemesis or Christ our Saviour.

In an immense universe, man may seem as insignificant and as unimportant as a sparrow. In 2021, data from NASA's New Horizons space probe was used to revise the earlier estimate of the number of galaxies to roughly 200 billion galaxies in our universe and each galaxy contains 100 billion stars. We live close to one star in a universe of 20,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars.

The Drake Equation attempts to calculate the likelihood of life in just our galaxy. Earth is the only planet that we know that has life. Unfortunately, the formula contains a variable, "The average number of "Earthlike" planets (potentially suitable for life) in the typical solar system". This is "0" and so the likelihood is zero. I think that the chances of meeting another human on another planet, in any galaxy, far, far away is 0, nil. David must have sat in the dark of night, keeping guard over his flocks, looking into the blackness of space, and thought of his insignificance in the grand scheme of things, *Psa 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him*? But man is important and Jesus has visited us.

Man is important and more important than sparrows, *"Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows".* If God took care of the sparrows who died under the gaze of God, He will certainly take care of you. The universe is a big place, but you occupy a position in it, and in terms of importance, you punch way above your weight

110. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost *Luke 12: 8 - 12*

Luk 12:8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: Luk 12:9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. Luk 12:10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. Luk 12:11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: Luk 12:12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

The disciples need strengthening and guiding and this does both. It generates a boldness to "confess" Christ. But what does it mean to "confess" Christ? Many Christians think it mean to testify of Christ, to go around preaching the Gospel of Christ, making a public confession of faith. It encompasses this, but I think it means much more. There are some very bold people for the Lord, who do not have the ability to preach publicly and are not called to do so.

The word confess, ὁμολογέω = homologeō, means to assent, to covenant, to stand beside, "*Whosoever shall* ***stand beside me*** *before men".* To confess Christ means to stand beside Him, with Him and on His side, in all the things He has taught. Can you honestly say your church stands with Christ on all the things He has taught or only on selective things? Does your church hold liberal views?

I know that many will be disappointed on the last day, because they had "confessed" Christ in their own way, but it was not how He wanted to be represented, and these people didn't stand beside Him, *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*.

These people thought that they were on Christ's side, but they were not, even though they had done "*many wonderful works".* The confession of Christ was only partial and so they did not enter the Kingdom. It is like the Israelites, who went through so much with Moses, had the religion that elevated them above all nations, yet failed to grasp the Promised Land, *Num 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Num 14:23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: ..... Num*

14:31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. Num 14:32 But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

Only two families, Joshua's and Caleb's families, which escaped from Egypt, entered the Promised Land, a remnant of all those who professed faith, a remnant of all those who went to Church.

Those who stand with Christ shall stand with His angels, *Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats*: Likewise there is the corollary, *Luk 12:9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.*

Christianity is not negotiable. Christ did not come to forgive people of their sins and then let them conduct affairs as they see fit. He did not save them from Egypt to go their own way. It is another warning from scripture for all of us who would be disciples, *1Co 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;* ***1Co 10:2*** *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 1Co 10:3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 1Co 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 1Co 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 1Co 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 1Co 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.1Co 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 1Co 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 1Co 10:11* ***Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*** *1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* The people had not confessed Christ.

God did not come down in the OT to choose a people and let them go off and do their own thing. He came down as their leader and deliverer and they had to confess Him before men, and if they did not want to they were excluded. If you sent your only beloved son to take charge of your work, what would you do if he was rejected and put to death, *Luk 20:13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him*

when they see him. Luk 20:14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. Luk 20:15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ***What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them***? *Luk 20:16* ***He shall come and destroy these husbandmen****, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.* The husbandmen had not confessed Christ.

The priesthood of Israel, the scribes and Pharisees, wanted to take over the terms of the Covenant and depose Christ. They had put themselves in a position of control, or so they thought. They had put themselves at the head of religion, not unlike the denominational leaders today, and they did not want the boat rocked, and so they killed the Messiah. They had not confessed the Christ.

God did not call Christians to let them form a Christian Union, and once they did not like the terms and conditions, give them leave to negotiate new terms and conditions. If they disobeyed the terms and conditions, the Law, they were outside of the covenant. Nothing has changed in God's thinking today, and if we try to alter the terms of the NT, the New Covenant, there is no room for us in Covenant, we have broken the terms of the Covenant. If we are like that, we have not confessed Christ.

The next thing Jesus says follows on from this, that is there may have been a time when you did not confess Christ, and may even blasphemed Him. And lest we forget, we were such people, even like the people who now deny Christ, *Eph 2:1 You were once dead because of your failures and sins. Eph 2:2 You followed the ways of this present world and its spiritual ruler. This ruler continues to work in people who refuse to obey God. Eph 2:3 All of us once lived among these people, and followed the desires of our corrupt nature. We did what our corrupt desires and thoughts wanted us to do. So, because of our nature, we deserved God's anger just like everyone else.*

God gives us His word that He will not hold our blasphemy towards Christ against us, that He will surely forgive us. He is extremely gracious to us, *2Co 5:19 In other words, God was using Christ to restore his relationship with humanity.* ***He didn't hold people's faults against them****, and he has given us this message of restored relationships to tell others*. GW.

But, and there is a "but", "*unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven".* This has caused much misunderstanding among the faithful. It is the unforgivable sin, *Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against*

the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither ***in this world, neither in the world to come****.*

It is the mark of the beast, *Rev 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven*. You can speak against Christ but not against the Spirit of God. Speaking against the Spirit of God is the unforgivable sin. Attributing the works of God to satan, *Mat 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: Mat 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? Mat 12:27* ***And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges*** *…….Mat 12:31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come*.

Dr Gill says,

> **There is a sin unto death**; which is not only deserving of death, as every other sin is, but which certainly and inevitably issues in death in all that commit it, without exception; and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is neither forgiven in this world nor in that to come, and therefore must be unto death; it is a sinning wilfully, not in a practical, but doctrinal way, after a man has received the knowledge of the truth; it is a wilful denial of the truth of the Gospel, particularly that peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life, and salvation, are by Jesus Christ, contrary to the light of his mind, and this joined with malice and obstinacy; so that there is no more or other sacrifice for such a sin; there is nothing but a fearful looking for of wrath and fury to fall on such opposers of the way of life; and as the presumptuous sinners under Moses's law died without mercy, so must these despiteful ones under the Gospel; see Mat 12:31.

Can a Christian commit this sin? *1Jn 5:16 If any man see* ***his brother*** *sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* ***There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it****.* The word "brother" is used for the one committing the sin "*which is not unto death"*, but it does not say it is a "brother" committing the sin which is "unto" death. It merely says that, "***There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it****".* But there is a close relationship with the sinner,

otherwise how does the one praying know it the sin is forgivable or not? But there is a sin which it is pointless to pray for.

In Hebrews, it states that you can fall from grace and lose your salvation, *Heb 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, Heb 10:27 But a certain* ***fearful looking for of judgment*** *and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*. That surely cannot be true, can it?

If we go back to the parable of the sower, we see that a believer in the word can be fruitless and eventually die, *Luk 21:34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Luk 21:35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Luk 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man*.

The believer can have hope, but salvation should not be taken lightly, and this is why we must never take the salvation of God for granted, *1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*. I believe in the teaching that says, “once saved always saved”, but I do not believe that you can take that teaching as yours without the life conformed to Christ. I believe in the doctrine of predestination to the image of Christ, *Rom 8:29 Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to* ***be conformed to the image of his Son****, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified.* But that is only true for the children of God who are **conformed** to Christ.

Well, are you conformed, do you do only those things that please Him? And what about in 5 years time? There are many people who take a vow to “love, honour and obey” for life. A survey conducted in 2022 showed that 50% of marriages end in divorce. That means that half the people who married did not see the divorce coming, but come it did. Its true with Christ, some of the people who came into an eternal relationship, full of hope, just ended it.

Our Lord tells us that the Spirit of God will teach us what to say when we are brought before rulers, *Luk 12:11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: Luk 12:12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*

I notice that there are no hints at an escape plan. Jesus does not say when you are brought before the magistrates He will get you out of jail, give you a get out of jail free card. In fact, history records that if you get into this situation, the only way out is death. Stephen gives a remarkable summary of the history of Israel in an inspired speech and then is killed for it, *Act 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, Act 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Act 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, Act 7:58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. Act 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

It doesn't always end nicely but it always ends in victory. We are there on His business and He will speak for us, and that is a promise. There is no need to think what you will say, after all you will have enough to be concerned about.

To these disciples who had not strung more than a few words together, this was comforting news but also a little disturbing. What were they going into?

111. The Fool Luke 12: 13 - 21

Luk 12:13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. Luk 12:14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? Luk 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Luk 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: Luk 12:17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? Luk 12:18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. Luk 12:19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Luk 12:20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? Luk 12:21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

One of the “company”, one of the crowd, asks Jesus to mediate in a dispute over an inheritance. They must have seen in Jesus, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Arbitrator in Chief, the One who would set right the inequalities of this life. That is all some people see Him as, the man who came to set in order, our lives in this world. They had not understood Jesus and His work at all, *“Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?”*

Jesus never came because man could not handle disputes, He never came to sort out their differences, He came to rescue man from his obsession with wealth, money, gain, inheritance, all of the things men seek after. Man was not an equal who just needed a bit of help sorting his life out, man was a rotten sinner in need of much more help. Man, as a creature, was totally dependent upon God, blind as to reality, full of sin, and was in need of a spiritual transformation. Man’s life was about more than possessions and he should watch out that he was not consumed with covetousness.

Jesus sets a parable before them. It is about a successful entrepreneur, a farmer, who was already rich, but not content with what he had, and with no thought for God, was blessed even more by an excellent harvest. With nowhere to store his surplus products, he conceives a scheme to build a new warehouse to store them in. In fact he conceives a much grander scheme that involved knocking down his old warehouse and putting up a brand new state of the art, storage area. He was so pleased with his work that he calculated that he could take early retirement and live comfortably for many years to come.

Surely this man was prudent? He had done what most sensible people do. He had put something aside for his old age. He had in modern terms seen a pension advisor and invested for the future. They tend to speak of wealth management today, and they calculate how much you need a year which should include a new car, two holidays abroad, eating out in a restaurant at least once a month, subscription to a health centre, and so on, so that you might be comfortable in your old age.

Being comfortable in old age, self-sustaining is laudable, and because he could afford to retire he did. But pension schemes are of recent origin. In 1889, Otto von Bismarck started plans to introduce a pension law giving Germans over the age of 70 a measure of financial security in their old age, considered the birth of the world's first state pension, it influenced similar systems worldwide throughout the twentieth century. The idea was first put forward, at Bismarck's behest, in 1881 by Germany's Emperor, William the First, in a ground-breaking letter to the German Parliament. William wrote: ". . .those who are disabled from work by age and invalidity have a well-grounded claim to care from the state."

The idea was radical because back then, people simply did not retire. If you were alive, you worked, probably on a farm or, if you were wealthier, managed a farm or larger estate, like our man in the parable. That retirement age just about aligned with life expectancy in Germany then. Even with retirement, most people still worked until they died. At that time, the life expectancy in Germany (Bavaria) was 37.7 years for newborn males and 41.4 years for newborn females.

There were exceptions though. Military pensions had long been given to soldiers who had risked their lives (though those pensions didn't necessarily mean they could stop working altogether). In the United States, starting in the mid-1800s, certain municipal employees, fire fighters, police, teachers, mostly in big cities, started receiving public pensions, and in 1875, the American Express Company started offering private pensions. By the 1920s, a variety of American industries, from railroads to oil to banking, were promising their workers some sort of support for their later years.

Most of these pension programs pegged the retirement age to 65. This age had less to do with health and more to do with economics, and some workers could keep on going for years, and "old age" didn't necessarily mean bad health. There was some research, however, that documented a decline in mental capabilities starting around age 60. Conventional wisdom held, too, that by 60 a man had certainly done his best work and should give way to the next generation.

The world that we live in is certainly a lot better in terms of welfare than it was for our forefathers, and we in the Western world live like kings compared to them. But are we wrong to make the best of a broken world, with our state pensions and private pensions? Surely Jesus is not going to condemn the entrepreneur in our parable for taking care of himself and not being a burden upon others. He certainly does not rely upon a state pension but upon his own graft.

Well, the man in our story decides his retirement is gong to be the good life, and "*eat, drink, and be merry"* will be his motto, and perhaps he had taken it from the passage in the Bible, *Ecc 8:15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than* ***to eat, and to drink, and to be merry****: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun*. If he had lived in our day he might have gone on an around the world cruise or a stay at a luxury hotel to celebrate his good fortune.

To those around him, he was blessed of God. When I told a colleague, an African, that I had won on the Premium Bonds, he said, smiling at me, "I'll come to your church", no doubt hoping that my good fortune would rub off on him. But

unknown to the man, the entrepreneur, the character in our story, the seeds of death were already working within him. When he went to bed that night, full of good cheer and hope for the future, he never thought that he would not open his eyes again on this earth.

The cause of his death is not known. It may have been a cancer, working undetected in his body, silently, stealthily, a tumour that was to prove fatal, and it had been growing inside of him from the very day of his record breaking harvest. It may have been an aneurism, or a stroke that happened in his sleep and killed him. It may have been sudden arrhythmic death syndrome when someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly from a cardiac arrest, when the heart suddenly stops pumping blood around the body and this stops the breathing and starves the brain of oxygen. There are many ways to die suddenly, and the first he knew of the fact that he was dead, was when he heard a voice saying, "*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee".* And then his mind went into overdrive, panic and the shock of knowing that he was irretrievably dead. What had started out as a triumphant day had ended in an abrupt misery.

To add to his misery was the thought that the things he had left behind his fortune, would go to someone else, a waster or a relative who would fight over it, like the man Jesus had just been talking to in the crowd. Perhaps this story of Jesus was based on this very relative who had died, leaving an inheritance to be squabbled over. People who had not laboured had inherited the dead man's fortune.

It seems grossly unfair that a man should work all his life and not get to enjoy the fruit of his labour. All of that planning and with a Victorian work ethic, the man should be cut a little slack. Of course, we 20th Century Christians should also be rewarded for our good management of resources, pension provision, as well as him.

This is the thing however, the rich man was not rich toward God, *Luk 12:21 That's how it is when a person has material riches but is not rich in his relationship with God."* GW. He had spent his life getting "stuff" for himself, to stuff himself with, but in all of this he neglected God.

What does it mean when it says, "not rich towards God"? It could mean he used too much wealth on himself and didn't give any to God by way of giving to His poor. Most Christian are like that, and there is no way to put it, but that they are plain mean. These despicable people think a few pounds in the collection plate at church each week and the giving a gift at Christmas, a sponsored goat, to eat an already poor family's corn in Africa, is giving. That must have taken a great deal

of thought. I hope they get as good as they give, and that is all I will say on it for now.

It means much more than liberality to the poor. “Rich to God” is how you develop a relationship with God, putting as much effort into the relationship with Him, no, more effort into the relationship with Him, than we do in the games we play and the wealth we make. The love of money, covetousness and meanness, seem to go together, and you will find that “tight” people are also focused on money.

But there is more, the man who is rich to God, lays up “treasure” for himself. Matthew says the same thing, *Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*.

I came across this poem Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806 – 1861). She was a Congregationalist Christian, married to Robert Browning (famed for “Oh, to be in England Now that April's there”, Home thoughts from abroad),

> "Earth’s crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God;
> But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.
> The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
> And daub their natural faces unaware."

She wrote about earth as being “crammed”, bursting with heaven, which the mass of people do not see. The Creation has so much within its compass that we find multiple meanings in it. There is in any object, the wisdom of the Creator Jesus, the scientific wisdom which astounds us, fearfully and wonderfully made. In the same object is seen the Creators word, as Solomon did, *1Ki 4:32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 1Ki 4:33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes*. Each created object comes with a series of texts.

Whichever way you look at creation, it has multiple stories to tell, and we do not spend enough time looking. You remember the “Man with the Much Rake”? In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* you may recall the description of the Man with the Muck Rake, the man who could look no way but downward, with the muck rake in his hand; who was offered a celestial crown for his muck rake, but who would neither look up nor regard the crown he was offered, but continued to rake to himself the filth of the floor. That’s just how we are, looking at the things of this world, when so much more is offered to us, treasure in Heaven.

I think that to take this to heart may lead to a correction in our behaviour. You see, if we spend all our time on worldly things we are just like that entrepreneur who built bigger barns. But if we look closer at the Creator's handiwork, and immerse ourselves in heavens thoughts, we shall be a step nearer the Kingdom. We shall be discovering the Crown, by looking up and not by looking down and seeing the muck. We shall Glorify God all the more by seeing His works, *Rom 1:19 What can be known about God is clear to them because he has made it clear to them. Rom 1:20 From the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly observed in what he made. As a result, people have no excuse*. We shall be "richer towards God".

It is the subject of time management, the process of organizing and planning how to divide our time between different activities which is a problem. It is difficult, particularly so when you are younger and having to juggle the responsibilities of a family and work and we should pray for these young Christian families. I am in the twilight years of my life, when they say you should be "living the dream" or "the nightmare". I have got beyond where the man in our parable died, to enjoy my retirement, but I am aware of the decline that must inevitably come, as the Scripture says, *Ecc 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*;

I am grateful for the time I have, and for my Creator giving me a willing heart to learn and for opening my eyes to the Glory of His creation, which is a token of Heaven. This is where I spend my time.

112. The cure for anxiety *Luke 12: 22 - 31*

Luk 12:22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. Luk 12:23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Luk 12:24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? Luk 12:25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? Luk 12:26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Luk 12:27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Luk 12:28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? Luk 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. Luk 12:30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Luk 12:31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"And he said unto his disciples". Jesus still has "words" for His disciples, things for them to learn even although He had already sent them out to evangelise the people. Have you considered the implications of this? Jesus sent them out, without the full knowledge of Himself or the Gospel. Were the people "saved" who heard the Gospel or only partially saved? Do you have to know the whole Gospel before you are saved? And what of the questions that the disciples did not know the answers to, did that mean their message was incomplete?

The continual learning process is at the root of discipleship, as Paul says, *Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the* ***measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ***. The disciples were on a journey, and they had not completed it, but they were fit for the Master's service. They were usable, but they had not by any means arrived at perfection. This should warn us about complacency, about taking Christ for granted, about thinking more of ourselves than we are, and about taking salvation for granted. We can still work for Christ, but it is an apprenticeship and only if we complete the apprenticeship will we have arrived at "***the stature of the fulness of Christ***".

In the OT, there is a story of the men of Korah who were wiped out by the Lord. They were of the tribe of Levi, and therefore of a priestly tribe, *Num 16:1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men:* They had their duties, but they thought themselves better than they were.

They thought they could manage the priesthood and give the offering to God just as well as Aaron, thank you! Well, they couldn't, but they thought they could, *Num 16:3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?*

Moses rebuked them for their impudence, *Num 16:5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him*. They came before the Lord with their incense burning, expecting the Lord to receive them but instead they had a surprise, *Num 16:31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: Num 16:32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. Num*

16:33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

The men of Korah thought they were "Holy" but they were not. They considered that they were equals to the High Priesthood but they were not. They thought they "had arrived" but failed to see that they were on a journey, and this presumption is rife among Christians, *1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth* ***take heed lest he fall***. Why was that warning given if it was not a reality, if it could not come to pass? It is clearly for us.

Jesus, again specifically addresses this discourse to the disciples, by way of further encouragement. He opens with a seemingly contradictory statement on life, He says to them "do not to think about their life or their clothing", and then says, "*The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment".* I think that Jesus means, life is important, it is given by God, it is sacred, it is to be cared for, and that it is far more important than food. Food and clothes do not add up to a life, they are mere accessories to life, dressing up the corpse.

In this obese world of designer labels, you would be forgiven for thinking that food and clothes were everything. They are what "life" is about according to the fashionistas and influencers, but they are only for modesty and keeping warm The people's love of processed food can be seen in the multitude of seasonal goods for sale. 68% of men are overweight, compared to 60% of women. Moreover, 29% of men and 27% of women are considered obese. O how we love eating.

The sustainable clothing brand Rapanui has calculated during the current average length of adult life (63.2 years) that we each spend £33,274 on clothes, when we would only need £6,309 worth if we used them for their full lifespan. That £33,724 equates to a total of 786 pieces of clothing over a lifetime, 637 of which we don't need and ultimately go to waste, contributing to the 350,000 tonnes of wearable clothing that goes to landfill every year. Go to the beach near the lighthouse in Accra (Ghana) and you will see that Africa doesn't need the surplus either. We just love buying clothes and dumping them.

We have shallow minds and the majority of people do not even question why they are here on earth and probably do not care. There is no questioning of the meaning of life, of the meaning of existence, where we go when we leave this life, they are quite content to live in ignorance, as the entrepreneur said earlier, *Luk 12:19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many*

*years; take thine ease**, eat, drink, and be merry***. They are like the man who built bigger barns, with no thought that he is of finite life and that his life is in the hands of God and he is guilty before Him of many crimes.

Look at the ravens, says Jesus to His disciples, they don't farm the land and they don't build storage areas, so who do you think cares for them? *Luk 12:24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?* Their food is taken care of by God. Jesus created the ravens to teach us a life lesson, to teach us not to be obsessed with food, not to build our life around it. The ravens get on with living, praising God with their croaking song and mimicking man's speech.

Here is an example of the created world which is "crammed with heaven". It is not meaningless, a product of random chance, it is Created with purpose, not just the physiology and the physical processes which make us, but the deeper lessons of life itself which show us how to live before our Creator, *Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are **without excuse***: Creation shows to us God.

The people who wander through life and give it little or no thought are "***without excuse***" because it is hiding in plain sight. Peter says of men, *2Pe 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 2Pe 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*: They wilfully shut their minds to the possibility of the flood just a foolish man shuts out the Glory of God in favour of a non-predictable universe governed by chance.

Jesus continues, *Luk 12:25 And which of you with **taking thought** can add to his stature one cubit?* Here is a thought experiment, and you can try it at home. Can you grow taller by thinking about it? Can you alter anything by thought? Thought, says Jesus, is just that, thought, and will not do anything. Thinking about things will not change them. Life's impossibilities remain life's impossibilities, no matter how much you think about them, and worry does nothing, surely it is better to give the things we cannot do to God? *Luk 12:26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*

It is as if the Lord has deliberately created flowers to show that the best of humanities designs, cannot compete with His designs, *Luk 12:27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Luk 12:28 If then God*

so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

It seems wrong that such beauty should be treated in such a disdainful manner. Surely all beautiful objects, the beauty of youth, the beauty of nature is to be treated, put upon a pedestal, as the pinnacle of the created works of God, perfection being His great work. The beauty of the lilies, crafted by the Architect of the universe, a marvel of genetic information, computed to emerge in beauty, crafted with such care and purpose is taken by man's hand and thrown, without a second thought into the oven. That I suppose is the result of entropy. The second law of thermodynamics means hot things always cool unless you do something to stop them. It expresses a fundamental and simple truth about the universe, that disorder, characterised as a quantity known by man as entropy always increases, disorder increases and with it death.

I think that death and hell is a dark place because man does not see the works of his Creator. Having spent a life time oblivious to the works of God, not seeing anything in them but the utility which they afford man, and after a life time of ignoring the works of God, why should He prepare them for a glory which they do not see? They are blind and there is no need to see the works of God because they are blind to them, *Mat 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 8:12 But the children of the kingdom* ***shall be cast out into outer darkness****: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

If you see the care with which the lily is made and yet so easily discarded, think on this, consider this. Are you not a greater creation, made in the image of God, and will He not care and clothe you, *"O ye of little faith".* That is not a derogatory term that Jesus uses. In fact the four words in our language is one word in the Greek. *"O ye of little faith"* is ὀλιγόπιστος = oligopistos, which I think is better rendered "little faiths". It is not that they were worthless or had no faith, but that they were of small faith, and Jesus was encouraging more faith.

The sum of the matter is this, whatever you seek on earth, whatever the world seeks, is secondary to the great encouragement that Jesus gives, *Luk 12:29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.* Here we have another group of words summed up in the Greek by one word. Neither "*be ye of doubtful mind"* which is μετεωρίζω = meteōrizō, to raise in the air, by which you get a picture of anxiety, someone who is in suspense. In fact you could say, don't be a **meteor**.

By the way, I learned the other day that a **meteoroid** is a small body moving in the solar system that would become a **meteor** if it entered the earth's atmosphere, and when it hits the earth it is called a **meteorite**.

So we are encouraged not to become meteors, not to be up in the air over something, not to be anxious, or little faiths, *Luk 12:31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.* What things? Not just food and clothing but whatever your Father thinks necessary, and you will be content with what He gives because you are His. There are no malcontents in the Kingdom.

The next verse in very unpalatable. We have swallowed the sweet promises and now we are given some very bitter medicine, “Sell all you have”, says Jesus. Oh no, He does not mean literally everything does He?

What do you think?

113. Selling up *Luke 12: 32 - 34*

Luk 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luk 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Luk 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

When I was about 4 years old, my Father used to play a game with me, which terrified me. During the war he had been in the army and changed regiments to join the paras, the 1st Airborne, and having been to Arnhem and survived, I was to be the bearer of the name of this battle, in the form of my middle name. The game consisted of standing on the edge of the dining table, like a parachutist and he would say, “action stations number one go”, whereupon he expected me to jump off of the table into his hands, except that I didn’t jump. I was too anxious and afraid, because I did not trust him to catch me.

I hated this game even more when my little brother came along. He would stand on the edge of the table and jump, even before dad had finished saying, “action stations……” and my dad never failed to catch him. But I continually froze and couldn’t do it. Would you jump out of a plane with no parachute? Not likely, and I never did.

When I read this verse, I was back again on the table's edge, seemingly 100's of feet in the sky, being encouraged to jump. "*Sell that ye have"*, says my heavenly Father and I will catch you. Its easier to pass over this verse than expound it but I must do it because it is written. It is also easy to find excuses, get out clauses, and a lot of people do this, particularly if they are rich, *Luk 18:22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. Luk 18:23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. Luk 18:24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God*!

I bet you started to look for escape clauses when I mentioned this subject last time. Of course, if you are a church leader you may have jumped for joy at the prospect of this new found source of wealth coming from your congregations, but this is not the prosperity Gospel. In fact it is just the opposite, its **the poverty Gospel**, because selling your goods will make you poor. If you were poor to start with, then you can expect to lay your life down, *Luk 21:3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: Luk 21:4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had*. A better translation is, "she has given all from her poverty, even her life".

The widow gave her last "mite" to the treasury of God. She was not long for this world, she was at the mercy of God, totally dependent on Him, not worried for anything, and she could say, "if I live I live and if I die I die", she knew where her life was truly rooted. Whether she had that attitude as a young married woman or whether it came with the decline into old age we do not know. It is certainly easier to give stuff away when you are older and when your life expectancy is statistically lower than when you were young.

The Jerk is a 1979 American comedy film directed by Carl Reiner and written by Steve Martin, Carl Gottlieb, and Michael Elias. It's a rags to riches to rags film. In one of the scenes when Steve Martin's character has lost his fortune, his girl and his house, he goes on one final walk around his home, selecting certain cherished items before leaving. This is the dialogue,

> Well I'm gonna to go then. And I don't need any of this. I don't need this stuff, and I don't need you. I don't need anything except this. And that's it and that's the only thing I need, is this. I don't need this or this.

> Just this ashtray. And this paddle game, the ashtray and the paddle game and that's all I need. And this remote control. The ashtray, the paddle game, and the remote control, and that's all I need. And these matches. The ashtray, and these matches, and the remote control and the paddle ball. And this lamp. The ashtray, this paddle game and the remote control and the lamp and that's all I need. And that's all I need too. I don't need one other thing, not one – I need this. The paddle game, and the chair, and the remote control, and the matches, for sure. And this. And that's all I need. The ashtray, the remote control, the paddle game, this magazine and the chair…….

Getting rid of what we own is a bit like that. I cannot understand for the life of me, why I have half of the things I have got. Drawers, cupboards and the garage are full of stuff that I never use. Why have I got it? Because I think that I need it. I think this is probably the reason we don't want to sell them up, and we think the items are usable. When I worked at the Admiralty, we had a roof space in one of our buildings which was full of stuff we never used. We called it "the come in handy" space. We Christians have come in handy spaces because we are unsure that the Lord will be there for us. We're unsure of the Lord's providence for us and we shake about a bit, in two minds, and there you have it, a "little faith".

The certain ruler, the one who obeyed most of the commandments, wanted to know what to do to inherit eternal life. It was a hard choice, money or heaven, *Luk 18:22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. Luk 18:23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich*.

We listen to that story and sigh, "Ah, it must be hard if you have riches", thinking that we are less well off than him, but are we? We are surely richer in the western world than this man, we live like kings, and we have medicine, houses with plumbing, toilets, cars, state pensions, varieties of food all year. We cannot say that we are not in his position. You see, we try to justify what we have, then minimise it, and then hang on to it, while at the same time, condemning "riches" as inherently evil.

But at the same time, we scrabble through our minds, and we say, wait a minute, wealth isn't condemned in the Bible, its how you use it, and suddenly its alright to have wealth, and we have got a justification to keep it, yes all of it. Zacchaeus was a rich man and he did not give all his money away, only half of it, by way of restoration, *Luk 19:7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. Luk 19:8 And Zacchaeus stood,*

and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the ***half of my goods*** *I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation****, I restore him fourfold****. Luk 19:9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Jesus said he had "salvation" and gave away only half of his goods.

Good for dear old Zacchaeus, he is an example of not having to sell all your goods, and we take some comfort in that, while hanging on to our goods. People are basically mean and covetous, and Christians are no exception. They do give, not much, but a lot of that giving is self interested. They give to their families, to people they know, to the causes that have affected them, to things which they are emotionally attached to, but seldom to the needy poor who they don't know. They prefer that their giving is sanitised, managed by someone, managed by the church that they go to, because they will not have to get their hands dirty and they won't have to face the miserable and sad people, to get emotionally involved with the people that they are giving to and heaven forbid, there is the possibility they will have to keep giving to.

They give seasonally, when their hearts are moved with emotion, like at Christmas, only so that they can indulge their appetites in the things that they choose, but, then they can indulge without the slightest twinge of conscience, *Jas 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Jas 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Jas 5:3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days*.

Just when we thought that we had a reason to keep it all, or some of it, or give it away, we are challenged by that verse in James epistle. What are we to do? Luke says give it up, *Luk 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.* That verse cannot be ignored, cannot be excused, cannot be side stepped, cannot be changed into something else by mere casuistry, the use of clever but unsound reasoning.

It comes to me and every other Christian as a great truth from the Lord Himself, and whether we will accept it or not, we must think about it and we must do something about it. I am not going to tell you to sell all your goods and I am certainly not going to tell you not to. I will though exhort you to give this some serious meditation.

I will start the ball rolling with this quote from John Piper to a Christian brother, Noah,

> Now, lots of other passages could be brought in to show that owning nothing and giving away everything was not, in the New Testament, the way Jesus and the apostles conceived of the ongoing corporate Christian life. I'll just mention two things in closing that might give Noah some guidance against this background.
>
> First, don't think just of percentages for how much you give away. Think of concrete people and concrete needs as you live your life, and see if your heart really loves people. Here's what I mean.
>
> "Remember that all of your money is God's, not just what you give to the Lord." The good Samaritan was commended that he stopped and helped the wounded man on the road. He had some wine to give him. He had a donkey that he would let him ride. He had money for paying for his lodging (Luke 10:30–35). Jesus didn't question him, saying, "Hey, why do you have a donkey? Why do you have wine? Why do you have money? You're supposed to give everything away." The point was, do you love the person in front of you at a cost to yourself?
>
> Shift your way of thinking. Do not merely think, "What percentage can I get rid of?" but rather, "The people that I deal with and that I'm aware of — do I love them as I ought with my resources?"
>
> Here's the second thing I would say: remember that all of your money is God's, not just what you give to the Lord. This means that we should think of every expenditure in a kingdom-advancing way, not just what we give away. It is all Christ's. He owns you. He owns it. Every single thing you spend and what you give is ministry and should be designed to magnify Christ.
>
> Noah, I'm with you in the struggle just as much now, at age 73, as I was when I was 23. Let's pray for each other that we not be taken captive by our possessions.

That's a very nice bit of speaking by John Piper but I am still none the wiser, and he does not give it all away, but just talks about giving it away, and I am looking for a principal.

I think that the answer lies in that earlier statement of Jesus concerning the disciples. They were “little faiths”. The widow woman, nameless, whom Jesus singled out as an example for giving everything away and who threw herself on the mercy of God, was a “great faith”. The Centurion with a sick servant, had a greater faith than all of those in Israel. How much faith you have is proportional to what you get rid of. How much you hang on to will be a measure of faith. I think that is a way of measuring faith.

Point one, if you have not got the faith to give stuff away, you have not got the faith, but you can still be a disciple. If you cling to it because you are inherently mean, or just covetous, you have something you really must work on. If you have lots of junk you haven’t used for months or years, junk it. If you don’t like giving to certain people who have a need, ask the Lord to reveal to you why you cannot give?

The second point is it is God’s money not yours. We must be willing to let go of it, all of it, and we see another measure of our faith, in the willingness to let go and let Jesus. Are you willing to let go and give it all up in 30 seconds. No, then you are probably the one Jesus is talking to.

It is all the Lord’s money anyway and we are just stewards of it, whether it be a little or a lot. It seems strange that we will account for it as if it were our own, but He gives us things to see where our hearts are going and we can see too. If we are greedy and covetous, we can by this simple test, cast our lives under God’s lens and see ourselves as He sees us. It is very gracious of Him, because we see what shall become of us if we continue like that. He is showing us the future and what will happen if we do not change.

He tells us that to sell what we have on earth makes a place in heaven more likely. In a sense it is buying a place in Heaven, and yet it is bought with God’s money. You are using God’s money to get into His Kingdom. He is making your entrance easy, only if you do not get locked into looking at it as your own money.

Luk 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Luk 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

114. Ready to go *Luke 12: 35 - 40*

Luk 12:35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; Luk 12:36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Luk 12:37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. Luk 12:38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. Luk 12:39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

It seems to me the section is about the coming of the Lord. It is, as if it refers to a time in the distant future, a time well out of our range of thinking, but in reality it is much closer and it can refer to the time that you die. It can refer to the time when you are taken from this life in death.

We learn as disciples that we are also servants and that far from taking it easy and basking in the idleness and complacency of thinking that we are a saved people, and heaven is just a formality, we see that we have a duty to be ready for His coming. We have no idea when Jesus is coming, *Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*. It may be today it may not be, but we are to behave as if it was today, and we must be ready for His arrival.

Are you expectant of His coming? I don't mean "do you think the Lord is coming again" or "are you expecting Him to come sometime", but are you expecting the coming of Christ imminently, this very second and is it a constant thing with you, always in the front of you mind? It should be.

The two opinions of death are that it either holds nothing for you and it is part of the process in a meaningless universe, or you go to heaven the paradise of God. But neither of these views is correct. There is an important event which occurs to all men, the judgement, and you may look to avoid it and "pass go" to enter heaven directly, but you cannot avoid this, *Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*: Every one of us will be taken there, *2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done,*

whether it be good or bad. Whatever opinion you hold of death, you will go to judgement first.

When Paul writes this, he is writing to the Churches, *2Co 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto* ***the church of God which is at Corinth****, with all the saints which are in all Achaia*: Paul is writing to the churches because it is those who profess Christ and those who will read this, me and you and it is relevant to us. In death we first appear before Christ the Judge, before the sentence is applied. *Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*.

We're not there yet, and we have still have time to react to the message, *Luk 12:35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning Luk 12:36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

This is an indicator of how much you desire to serve and be with Him. You can want His benefits but you may not want to serve Him, you may want to live forever but you don't really want to live with Him, because it will cramp your style. I see a measure of how much people want the things of Christ by answering this simple question, "are you desirous of going to be with Christ this very minute"? If there is any hesitation, "umming and aahing", any excuses, then the person is not committed to going to be with Him, and their "Christianity" is suspect. Those who see this life as having value over a life lived with Jesus, have got their priorities wrong, but there is time to change priorities.

There may be many reasons that you think take precedence over coming to Christ's feast, like these people in the Bible, *Luk 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.* On the face of it they seem like good excuses, but if you think about them, they are pointless excuses. Who will need a piece of ground, a yoke of oxen to plough, a wife to marry? These things will be irrelevant in the Kingdom of God. We will not have them.

But by losing our sense of values, we shall also lose our place at the feast, *Luk 14:21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Luk 14:22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. Luk 14:23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. Luk 14:24 For* ***I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper****.*

The supper is served and is served by the Lord. It is reminds us of the Passover in Egypt, *Exo 12:11 And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover*. It was a going away meal, in a way like the last supper. It was not a cosy comfy meal, not a meal taken at leisure, it was eaten in a hurry

Deu 16:1 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night……..Num 33:3 And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. There is some doubt as to which night they came out but come out they did, at night and in haste. They had gotten themselves dressed and ready to eat and go.

So the Lord tells us in a like manner as those Israelites in Egypt, to be ready for the Master will come. At whatever time He comes, in the evening of the day, at midnight or later still, He expects us to be ready for Him. I remember as a child that when my grandmother was coming to visit us, or some uncle or aunt, I would wait at the train station for hours, in anticipation of their coming. Can I not do this for my Lord, especially as He will bless us and serve us?

With adequate preparation, we shall, like the good man of the house, hold out against the thieves and robbers of this world, those who would steal our inheritance. Today you do not have to break in to steal from someone, so we might update this to say be on watch for scammers, *Luk 12:39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.*

What do they steal? They steal our truth. They steal Jesus, the steal His reality and turn it into a myth, the steal His book, the Bible, and put in its place criticism, falsehood and lies, they steal the purity of Christ and substitute a dressed up blasphemy, which they call true religion.

This leads us on to another intriguing thought, *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man* ***cometh*** *at an hour when ye think not.* Why didn't the disciples respond to this statement, why didn't they say, "Why are you coming when you are already here?" We do not even think about why they did not ask, because to us, the death, the resurrection and the second coming are all major beliefs among us. We know how the story ended, but they did not and to the disciples, this was new to them, it was the first time it happened. The disciples were writing the history for us, *Luk 9:44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. Luk 9:45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that* ***they perceived it not****: and they feared to ask him of that saying.*

They did not even know or perceive half of the things that Jesus said, and we wonder just how much the disciples did understand or comprehended about what He said and did. It was not until after the resurrection that the events became clearer. Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus, *Luk 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Luk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Another thing that He says about Himself is that He is "the Son of Man ", *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for* ***the Son of man*** *cometh at an hour when ye think not.* Did they understand this saying or was it kept hidden from them? They do not ask of Him what it means. I am sure we find it difficult to say exactly what this means and I will give a few suggestions.

The "Son of Man" is a term that is applied to mortal men, ordinary men, Ezekiel and Daniel for example, *Eze 47:6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.....Dan 8:17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision*.

It is the appellation of the Saviour when He walks the earth. It is Jesus, the man, fully human, mortal, frail, *Joh 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. Joh 12:33 This he said, signifying what death he should die. Joh 12:34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up****? who is this Son of man?*** *Joh 12:35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while*

is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

He was not ashamed to be called a man even though He was the Son of God, He became a man for our sakes, *Heb 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Heb 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*

This may be summed up, *Heb 2:6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the* ***son of man****, that thou visitest him? Heb 2:7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Heb 2:8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man*.

There is another revelation that brings together **the Son of man** and **Son of God,** *Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like* ***the Son of man*** *came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*.

The Son of Man is the one who comes in the clouds of heaven, the one who is given dominion, glory and a kingdom. The one who the remnant of all nations shall serve, the one who lives forever and has a kingdom that lasts forever. These verses in Daniel bring together the great thoughts we have had in Luke, *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

The coming of the Son of Man is the culmination of the ages. It forms one of the foci of the NT literature. No Christian should underestimate the importance of the Second Coming of Christ, Answers in Genesis, says,

> Without His return, there is no final consummation of all things, which includes the restoration of creation, the eternal reward for the

> redeemed, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. Every Christian should long for His return—to see Him gloriously carry out the victory that was already won at the Cross.
>
> Revelation 1:7 starts with the words, “Behold He is coming. . . .” The plans have been made, and the preparation is underway. Even though none of us know the day or the hour of the Second Coming, we must live in expectation of His arrival. He is coming. This means that we must be ready—not in the sense that we stand around gazing at the heavens, but in the sense that we are busy spreading His gospel with urgency.

In the 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are 300 references to the coming of Christ. That makes 1 out of 30 verses in the New Testament that speaks of the coming of Christ. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, 23 refer to the coming of Christ. Of the four that do not mention it, three are one-chapter books. Jesus Himself referred to His own coming 21 times. For every time the first coming of Christ is mentioned in the Bible, His second coming is mentioned 8 times. We are exhorted over 50 times to be ready for the coming of Christ. We are to live looking for the return of Christ. The law of proportion in the Bible has to do with the frequency something is mentioned as to its importance. That being the case, prophecy is very important.

The disciples may not see the importance of this momentous event yet, and they may not see the meaning of the Son of Man yet, but it will become central in their teaching of Christ later on and they will defend it with their lives.

By the way, it says second coming, *Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation*. There is no third coming, when He comes, that’s it, “game over”.

115. Faithful and wise stewards *Luke 12: 41 - 48*

Luk 12:41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? Luk 12:42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Luk 12:43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Luk 12:44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he

will make him ruler over all that he hath. Luk 12:45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; Luk 12:46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. Luk 12:47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luk 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more

Luk 12:41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? Was the parable of the "man returning from the wedding" and "the good housekeeper" given to just the disciples for consideration or to all of the people who stood with the disciples listening? Peter is again inquisitive of the Lord's teaching, as for example, when he says, *Joh 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Joh 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me*.

What was in Peter's mind, was he concerned for all the people that were around him? Was it idle curiosity, no real purpose, or was it to gain an advantage over others? Either way Jesus does not answer him. Sometimes the questions we ask are absolutely pointless. They are the "what ifs" of things that we cannot test and they are speculative and divisive. Sometimes we ask questions that are none of our business. Peter, what does it matter to you, will you be able to change anything by asking that question, you have enough to do, what has been said applies to you, and if it should apply to anyone else, so what, let them take it to heart! "*What is that to thee? follow thou me"*.

The thought that Peter uttered, while he might not have known why he said it, and Peter often said things that he didn't know why he said them, is an important punctuation of the passage. It causes us to pause and think. Perhaps Peter said this for **US,** for our benefit, lest we pass it by as a story for those times, and not relevant to this generation. Christians read the Gospel of Luke without giving much thought to the application of it, but this word of Peter, brings us up short, to the relevance of the passage, to Jesus speaking to us. Yes, He is speaking and He speaks to me and He speaks to you. We are there with the crowd, milling around, stretching our ears to hear what He says to us.

The Lord continues with His parables, *Luk 12:42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household,*

to give them their portion of meat in due season? Luk 12:43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Alright Peter, do you want to be a faithful and wise steward, οἰκονόμος = oikonomos, household manager, economist, then you do a good job and provide nourishment for your house. You be straight in your dealings, upright, equitable, honest, showing no favour, and you as a servant will find that you are blessed by the Lord and we too will find it a blessing, if we are found so doing.

More than that, the blessing will contain a promotion, *Luk 12:44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make* ***him ruler over all that he hath****.* This story has its parallels in two well known stories of the Kingdom, *Luk 19:12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. Luk 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come…….. and Mat 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. Mat 25:15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey*.

The parable of the minas or pounds, and the parable of the talents are stories about the owner leaving his servants his money to manage, and the outcome of their good and bad stewardship on his return. I think it is a story of faithful management and the second coming of Christ in the power of His Kingdom when He will reward His servant for having been faithful and punish those who have been unfaithful. These are parables for today, not just for the disciples, they are for all people, but especially leaders, who should think about what they do with the Lord's intellectual property or any of His property. Like the parable before us, stewardship is the key to all of the stories. It does not matter that there are differences, and you can cavil about them, raise petty or unnecessary objections to the differences, but if you are really concerned about what the stories say, you and I will take them to heart.

The rewards given to the servants in the stories are many, "rule over everything He has", "rule over 10 cities", "rule over 5 cities", and "rule over many things". I think that with the breadth of the stories, the Lord is showing us that He has a proportionate reward for His people, and it is far larger than the effort we expended in this world, *1Co 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1Co 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*.

Have you also noticed something, something we often fail to see and understand? **Jesus is teaching disciples**. Well, you say, that's obvious, of course He's teaching the disciples that's what He does. But that is so different to the way us modern day disciples are brought to the faith. We meet Jesus in life, "come to Christ" as we say, and we may differ as to how we meet Him, but we all go our own ways afterwards, thinking that we are saved. We indulge ourselves in "the finished work of Christ", we say "I am saved I am a believer", and we take everything of Christ, the theological theory in particular, and we have none of the spiritual practice that makes it truly ours.

We take the theory of deliverance, and a person who comes to Christ, and is saved, and passes through judgment, and goes on to glory and we apply that theory to ourselves. There is no practical outworking of the Christian faith at all and without the practical details of sanctification, without the putting off of the old man, we frontload the doctrine of salvation and make it ours, without any practical change at all.

The disciples of Jesus day meet Him in person, yes, that's where we differ and it is what we hope for, but **He does not even tell them that they are saved**. He picks some of them up, on a beach and says "follow Me", but He neglects to say they are "saved", because they follow Him. He points to the future and says, if you believe me and do the many things I tell you, then you shall be saved, but not before you endure to the end. We have got it wrong somewhere. We say that we are saved and they, the disciples, did not even consider that they were saved, *Mar 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: **but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved***. They were disciples all of their lives, as we have said, and this meant that there was no complacency in their lives, no arrogance saying that they "had arrived", saying the Jesus had "saved them".

The teaching that Jesus gave to them was important and had to be listened to and acted upon, for therein lay their eternal welfare, and they kept learning and listening at the feet of Jesus, so at the last they should receive salvation, *1Pe 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 1Pe 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 1Pe 1:9 **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls**.*

This is where campaign evangelism is plain wrong and even verges on sinful. It gives an individual assurance of salvation that Jesus did not give. This is where

churches eager to get converts, goes far beyond Christ's teaching, giving salvation out by any means, other than continued discipleship. It gives it to sleeping infants by christening. And I have seen and known many people in the first flush of coming to Christ, and saying they were saved, fall away in time, *Heb 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, Heb 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, Heb 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*.

We may have assurance, but that is predicated upon the continual walk with Jesus, *Heb 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: Heb 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*.

But if you do not accept Jesus as Lord, then take heed of this warning, *Luk 12:45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; Luk 12:46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

It is not strange that there are some "Christians" who will look at the Lord's delaying to come, as an excuse for poor behaviour and start to take it out on their fellow believers. Suddenly that man will be confronted and condemned to face an eternity in the company of the unbeliever. The so called "Christian" will be condemned with the unbeliever. What price then all the doctrine of assurance that they held, for it was founded upon sand?

When Daniel was confronted with a delay to his petition, he did not give up, he persevered so that the prayer would become a reality, *Dan 10:12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

The person who is lax and disorderly in anticipating of the Lord's coming, is punished "with stripes", or literally plague, *Luk 12:47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luk 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto*

whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

It is quite clear that this servant who "knew" his Lord's will and did not do it, will be punished. The believer who was disobedient will be punished, and thus it means the so called "Christian" will be punished. It is clearly running contrary to the belief that all "Christians" are saved, but I will take this word of Paul to heart, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:* I will substitute the word "Christian" for "Israel", *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Christians which are Christians*:

What I mean is this. "Christian" is a word used to describe a follower of Jesus, but it does not make the person a saved person. Because you say, "I am a Christian" does not make you anymore a "Christian" than saying you are a "Jew" makes you a Jew, *Rom 2:28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. Rom 2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.* ESV.

Those servants who knew the Lord's will and did not do it, may have called themselves "Christians" in a latter day, but they were no more Christian, than an Israelite or Jew who crucified Christ. People will be punished for knowing, "*his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will",* not for what they called themselves, Jew, Israelite or Christian, they will be punished for what they did.

This is my opinion of these verses. Just what the "stripes" are, what the punishment is, how long it lasts, is unknown. In addition He, "*will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers*". It is written in there and it is a warning to all, us too, who will not listen and for people who go their own way. If the hat fits, wear it and don't look for excuses why this might not occur.

As Scripture says, *Rom 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: Rom 2:8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Rom 2:9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man* ***that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile****;*

116. The Lord's fire *Luke 12: 49 - 53*

Luk 12:49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Luk 12:51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: Luk 12:52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. Luk 12:53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

We continue with Christ's **Judgement theme** and it is quite different from His **Peace theme**, *Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father,* ***The Prince of Peace.*** *Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*.

Contrast this with the Judgement theme, *Mat 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. Mat 10:35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. Mat 10:36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household*.

They seem to contradict one another and how can they both be true? The question is, "Does God have good will toward all men"? *Luk 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* This verse, used at Christmas, suggests that God is well pleased with mankind as a whole, a message of peace and fellowship with him. Is it this or is it a bad translation? Well it depends on a single letter "s" which is in some manuscripts and not in others.

The word for goodwill is εὐδοκία, and the letter "s" changes the word from the nominative case to the genitive case, the possessive, εὐδοκίας. The "s" makes it the "genitive" form of the same word, which means that, instead of "goodwill/favour," the word should be translated "of goodwill/favour" or "possessing goodwill/favour." The text then means, *Luk 2:14 Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will.* DRB.

You may see the arguments at:

https://carm.org/about-bible-verses/does-luke-214-say-goodwill-toward-men-or-among-men-with-whom-he-is-pleased/

I take the DRB and others bibles which have this variant as being the correct text. I do so because in addition, the whole of scripture supports it. The scripture divides mankind as those who follow the Lord and those who go their own way. There is the biblical remnant and the rest of men who comprise atheists, other faiths and beliefs, pseudo Christianity and whatever else there is. God has goodwill to the remnant but not to the rest, *Heb 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back,* ***my soul shall have no pleasure in him****. Heb 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul*.

How do you think that God will Judge mankind? Do you think that after all that goodwill, after Christmas, He turns on man and introduces hell to them, or has it always been in His plan? We just got the message wrong, we mistranslated it, or worse still, we didn't like God's message so we changed it.

We always like to think that we are on the side of the angels. We take the teachings of scripture as they relate to man, such as the decrees of God, election, reprobation, the fall, mercy, and justice, as being truths which abound to our good, but we can only think that, if we follow Christ, and it is in the end that we are saved. However, the truths of scripture, are for the good, are for the elect, the remnant, those who truly love God, *Rom 8:28* ***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God****, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified*.

Are we as disciples prepared for this? Christ's fire becomes our fire and Christ's baptism is our baptism. *Mat 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. Mat 20:21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. Mat 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. Mat 20:23 And he saith unto them,* ***Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with****: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of*

my Father. Mat 20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

We have such a soft gospel. We would make the gates wide to the Kingdom of Heaven, we would welcome the world and his wife in, no matter what they had done, we say "Jesus loves you" to all men when we haven't even got them to the point of repenting, they can come in to Heaven without wiping their feet. But this teaching of Christ is much harsher and much harder to come to terms with. This is not the baby in Bethlehem, this is the Judge of all mankind speaking and He speaks the **Divisive Gospel**, the bit men do not like, for it is "peace to men of goodwill" but, *Isa 48:22 There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked*.

Jesus says, *Luk 12:49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Luk 12:51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:* Are you ready for this, you cosy disciples, comfortable in your own view that you have woven? Are you ready to join the Lord in fire raising.

What is this baptism that Jesus speaks of? *Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with* .How is Jesus using the word? "Blood and fire" is the motto of The Salvation Army that describes the blood of Jesus shed on the cross to save all people and the fire of the Holy Spirit which purifies believers. But I think it is something else, some other meaning. Jesus is speaking to Jews and it is being listened to under the first covenant, under law. Fire had a purifying element that also linked with judgement. *1Ki 18:24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.* The story is about the false prophets of Baal versus the prophet of God, about Jezebel's priests and Israel's prophet, and the one who was victorious was answered by fire. The fire from heaven licked up the water sodden sacrifice and the prophets of Baal were destroyed.

Christ comes with a purifying fire to divide mankind, to create conflict rather than give peace, *Luk 12:51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:* There will be a separation now and at the end of the world, *Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats*: But before that final physical separation, He separates us now into the two spiritual camps, those who follow Him and those who will not follow Him.

It will divide households, *Luk 12:52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. Luk 12:53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.* Jesus does not say rulers against subjects, governments against people, but He takes the closest relationship, the father, mother, son, daughter and in-laws, as those who will be divided by Him.

The passage is repeated in Matthew with additional words, *Mat 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a* ***sword.*** *Mat 10:35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. Mat 10:36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. Mat 10:37* ***He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*** *Mat 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Mat 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.....*and again in Luke, *Luk 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also,* ***he cannot be my disciple****. Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

There are things that the disciples should heed, and that means us 21st Century disciples as well. Notice what He says, "***He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me***" and "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also,* ***he cannot be my disciple"***.

Do you hear this, you who thought that you had already been saved, saved to disobey this word, saved to neglect Christ's teaching? If you set this word aside as requiring no compliance by you, then you are not His disciple. You may have spent a lifetime in doing the things of Christ that appealed to you, and yet, you disciple, you did not want to do this one, you shut your ears and went ahead to make a yoke with those who disobey, *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2Co 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye*

are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

That is something that we do not consider when we come to Christ or give it much thought when we have. We have a truce when it comes to our families. It is like that uneasy truce that many soldiers made on that Christmas in 1914, fraternising with the enemy. The men of "goodwill" gave up the fight for an emotional reconciliation. Sentiment with the people who will be killing you tomorrow. You may make friendships with people who are not Christ's and they, your own relatives, will turn upon you and tear you apart, if you dare to speak of Christ.

You will turn to me and say, if I turn away from my family and children, how on earth will they hear the Gospel? You have told them it, right, how many times have you told them? They will hear it because that is what you are called to do, to tell them the Gospel, but if you just go along with their conversations and are quiet, while they are set on the road to hell that is your fault. If you are using them as an excuse by saying, "I will stick around them because I will wait for an opportunity", but in reality that is a lie, because in reality you want their company. You are a fool and fooling yourself.

Who are your family, are they the same as Jesus family? *Mar 3:32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. Mar 3:33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? Mar 3:34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! Mar 3:35 For* ***whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother***. That totally redefines family, kith and kin. Genetics count for nothing, spiritual obedience is everything.

I have seen over my years as a "Christian" some appalling behaviour by Christians, in fact I have seen more conflict with the family of Christ than in the world. They turn on each other with surprising ease, and make quarrels out of personalities and doctrines intended for unity, become the progeny of strife. Yet in all this, they lack the resolve to turn on their unbelieving relatives.

Luk 12:49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Luk 12:51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: Luk 12:52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. Luk 12:53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son

against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

117. Signs of the time *Luke 12: 54 - 56*

Luk 12:54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. Luk 12:55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Luk 12:56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

Can we discern the signs of the times and moreover the end times? There were in Israel men who had that strange gift, *1Ch 12:32 And of the children of Issachar, which were men* ***that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do;*** *the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment*. The understanding had to be translated into deeds, ***"to know what Israel ought to do"***, if that knowledge was to be of any use.

How do we discern the "times" and what we are to do? And why am I a hypocrite if I do not discern the times? It will all depend on your world view and how you see this life panning out.

It is in part because the world lives by the principle of **uniformitarianism**. It makes it easier to sleep knowing the sun will rise tomorrow, but on this goldilocks planet, a solar flare could snuff us out like a moth in a candle flame, but because it hasn't happened yet we think it won't. Certainty is what we thrive on, and which is why we are good at manufacturing it or at least the dream of certainty.

"The present Is the key to the past and the present is the key to the future" is a statement of the uniformitarian principle. Deceptively simple but enormously powerful, it means that **the processes occurring today have operated throughout most of the Earth's history**. It implies that we know enough about the present to be able to extend our knowledge forward to focus on the future and backwards to the past. In the first of his three volumes, Charles Lyell (1797 –1875) sets forward the uniformitarian argument for the age of the earth. Processes now visibly acting in the natural world are essentially the same as those that have acted throughout the history of the Earth, and are sufficient to account for all geologic phenomena, so he thought. He thought that he could predict the past from knowing about the present.

But unifomitarianism is viewed as a problem, because of the inherent uncertainty of the hypotheses arrived at by the induction process. And it is a particularly sore point in geology because most hypotheses and "postdictions" (explanations after the fact) arrived at inductively, in this so called science, concern past events which cannot be directly or easily tested. The past is obviously connected in time with the present, but beyond the recorded time, written records which we possess, it becomes increasingly speculative. We are just guessing, because we haven't got a clue what happened in the distant past and we just guess at it.

For example, do you recall the recent green comet? In February 2023, a popular "newsrag" boldly declared,

> "Stargazers were treated to a stunning spectacle as an ultra-rare green comet - last seen by the Neanderthals - made its closest flyby of Earth in 50,000 years. The giant space rock, codenamed C/2022 E3, zipped past the planet at a distance of 26.4 million miles, having only recently been discovered by astronomers as it hurtled through space.

This is given as a statement of fact, but a contradictory fact, "last seen by the Neanderthals - made its closest flyby of Earth in 50,000 years.....having only **recently been discovered** by astronomers as it hurtled through space." The question we should ask is how do they know that 50,000 years ago somebody saw this comet? If it was only recently seen by astronomers, what astronomers saw it 50,000 years ago? Did you swallow this erroneous story? Who was around when the green comet supposedly flew past the first time? What records in the past confirm this sighting? Of course there are none and it is a fictional story, a fictional story, an invention of sinful men to fool us and provide some uniformitarian comfort with a non-existent past. They have created a lie and they believe it. Yes, we see a comet today, but its origin is a mystery, unless you are a believer.

We do not allow for these non-conformities in our pattern of existence. One of the ways that we cope with life, is that we each see ourselves in old age, as being in the same body that we had in our youth. We see increasing years as not a problem until we get there, and then we notice it, *Ecc 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*; The past is certainly **not** a key to the future.

It gets much worse though, for in this make believe world, in which we construct our existence, where we see ourselves as living forever young, where death, pain and suffering do not exist, it comes as an almighty shock to the system, that this

constructed view of life is utterly false. Then suddenly old age intrudes on our happiness, long-term illnesses, chronic long term illness, cardiovascular diseases (including stroke), cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, all blighting our happiness. The world doesn't turn out like we thought it would. The view of life we had was over optimistic.

This is something which confounds men, but it is part of that reality in which we live in, whether you like it or not. This world is God's creation and mankind is His servant. It has been a battleground for thousands of years. The spiritual world intervenes in this temporal reality for many reasons, for blessings, for judgement, for events that shatter your reality, like the Biblical Flood, God driven supernatural events intruding into history, like the Exodus from Egypt, the captivity of sinful Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem.

As well as plagues upon us, there are catastrophic events, which men deny, as Peter said, *2Pe 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep,* ***all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*** *2Pe 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 2Pe 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 2Pe 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

In the evolutionists Universe, with all events as chaos, with life a result of random process, with vast ages and slow imperceptible changes, with nothing having any absolute meaning, life with no rhyme nor reason, there is no explanation at all as to what it is all about. Why you are here. But in order to function, the evolutionists draw from our Judeo Christian values, that is **our values** when it suits them. The very fact that you have laws in the universe should be enough to disprove the fallacious concept of evolution, because in this universe there is order. But the reason men do not want the Creation to be real, is because they would have to accept the reality of order, and order comes from the hand of God. They prefer to have an explanation of everything, without reference to God. This is part of the secular world view.

The Christian view of life is the exact opposite to this godless view. It holds to a purposeful, created Universe which declares the nature of the Creator, His glory and infinitude. This universe is a temporary feature of mankind's probation, a place here in which the history of redemption is played out, a place in which the

Creator dies for the sins of His people, and a stage which will be rolled up as a scroll, when it has finished its purpose. This is the Christian world view.

Like the evolutionists, the Christians also try to frame their beliefs in the world of science. Evolution and Christianity are both religions, systems of belief but there are limits to empirical or operational science which they use, science which comes with proof. The things which can be demonstrated, operational science, the things which can be repeated and be proved are limited. The rest of the stories, which both religions, evolution and Christianity, gives to us are different, they are **historical science**. Historical science is little more than a philosophy to back up the views that both groups hold. But there are no prizes for either speculation, because this is not what Jesus commands us to do.

We can know about this world, and what makes it tick, but neglect the important issue, *Luk 12:56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth**; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?*** God doesn't commend us for being scientists, cosmologists, biologists or mathematicians, great scientists, huge intellects with a string of "ologies" after our names, only for having integrity and honesty in the things we handle. God knows all the intricacies of life and so how clever we think we think that we are, is nothing to Him. He looks on as these explorers of the natural world, some guessing wildly other just guessing and going on making assumptions, but the thing which He truly looks to find is the upright heart. All the powers of intellect are God's gifts anyhow, but we are accountable for how we use them, not for being clever.

The scientists, cosmologists, biologists or mathematicians, are all lawyers, those who use God's laws and try to find out new ones, and they can be hypocrites just as their counterpart, the lawyers of Jesus day were. As a warning about putting your faith in science "so called", as a settled thing, I observe that during my lifetime, man has discovered DNA and subsequently, the conclusions about the origin of life and information theory have dramatically changed the Darwinian hypothesis. In the field of Geology, as a boy, continental drift was not mainstream science but now it is, with plate tectonics being fashionable. In the 1950's cosmology knew next to nothing and a competing view of origins was the steady state universe postulated by Hoyle. Physics has come on in leaps and bounds with the discovery of sub-atomic particles and quantum theory. All these sciences have raised even more questions than answers for the evolutionist and no real answers on the exact model for the Creationist. God however is the only unchanging One, in this changing world of opinion.

And this brings me to another important point, that there is a spiritual dimension to the Universe a dimension that has to deal with moral issues, *Rom 1:20 For the*

invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; ***so that they are without excuse***: "Without excuse" for what? Not without excuse for not knowing about the cosmos, which they did, *Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*.

They knew right well what God expected of them but they inclined not to do it. Do you know why we have homosexuals? It is a judgement because the people chose not to follow God, *Rom 1:26 For this cause* ***God gave them up unto vile affections****: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: Rom 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet*.

When man becomes ungrateful, unthankful, full of vanity in his mind and has his heart darkened, he is not being condemned for his knowledge, he is being condemned for his morality. He will not listen to God, and he goes his own way, *Jer 13:10 This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing*.

Empirical science, operational science, the science that observes events and comes to some understanding of the events in the natural world, after many observations can say, "*When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass".* More often than not it will be true and so you get aphorisms, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky at morning, sailor take warning", "evening red and morning grey are sure signs of a fine day. Evening grey and morning red, put on your hat or you'll wet your head", "If it rains before seven, it will clear before eleven".

What a wealth of weather lore we have as a result of continuously scanning the skies. The same should be true if we were continually scanning the Scripture, we should have some aphorisms that we could have as warnings. The book of proverbs is full of aphorisms, "Greed kills selfish people "(Prov 1:19), "Trust in the Lord with all your heart"(Prov 3:5). We have some truths that are well established and generally true. We might also call these laws of life, God given truths, *Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*: Have you ever seen a men come back from the dead? It does not

mean that because you have not seen it, that it does not happen, but through general observations, we say that death is more than likely to occur once.

To that truth of death, Scripture adds, "*after this the judgment".* Not having seen judgement, but having seen other great works of God, the Creation, I am inclined to think that this is a true statement. In fact it is said elsewhere, *Ecc 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. Ecc 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*.

The judgement to come was known to Jesus hearers. They were all Jews and some were disciples, and there were no gentiles among them. We should remember this point. They were not like the gentiles Paul speaks to in Greece, *Act 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. Act 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you*. The gentiles did not know God, but the Jews did, and this is the point.

When Jesus calls the Jews "hypocrites", He means "a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion, a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings", *Luk 12:56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time*? They were not ignorant, lacking knowledge, they had the knowledge, they had belief but chose to ignore it. Thus they were hypocrites.

The same goes for us today, the "Christians", I mean. We have come to a knowledge of God, like those Jews of old. We too can discern the signs in nature and we know full well the signs of the times, the end times, *Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*.

But like those people, we are the ones "eating and drinking", wilfully neglecting the signs of the times, in order that we can have our pleasures. Christianity is taken as a lifebelt, and we hope that when the end comes, because we have this lifebelt, we shall be saved, whatever state we are found in. But the truth is, there is no lifebelt, no device to save you, because God doesn't provide devices to save you. You are either found in Him at the end of your life or you are not found in

Him. Being found in Him is the way you are living your life, consistent with Him and this will save you, not a lifebelt.

The good news is however, that “the past does not define the present or future”, as Lyell said, and certainly not as a believer. There is time to change and this warning given by Jesus to us. We must listen to it or we face the consequences. We believers must not be complacent, we must observe the times or we shall be lost, and we must be like those men of Issachar, *1Ch 12:32 And of the children of Issachar, which were men* ***that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.***

118. Settle in the way *Luke 12: 56 - 59*

Luk 12:56 *Ye* hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? *Luk 12:57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? Luk 12:58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. Luk 12:59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.*

The verses that we looked at last time lead straight into this story about settling a matter before it comes to court. The case of Vardey versus Rooney, the famous footballer’s wives, is an example of pride not wanting to settle out of court and costing over two million pounds to settle in court. Like the hypocrites that will not discern the end time, these people that Jesus speaks of, cannot make a sensible judgement. They cannot make sense of the coming of the Son of man.

What are we to make of this verse dealing with the end time? We see this through our 21st Century NT eyes not the eyes of the 1st Century OT Jew. Jesus is talking to the Jews, and the idea of the Gentiles being saved and the final apocalypse which “we” anticipate, is not in their Jewish thinking yet, *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* This is the “Jewish apocalypse” which will in future time, become our “second coming of Christ”. The statement, *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not,* gets the Jews to look at the signs that are imminent to them.

The signs were plain to see. The Jews had already gone through periods of trouble, from the period of the captivity in Babylon to more recently, with the rulers of the remnant of Alexander's empire in the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews fought there way back from oppression.

> "While less trained and under-equipped for pitched battles, the Maccabees could control which battles they took and retreat into the wilderness when threatened. They defeated two minor Seleucid forces at the Battle of the Ascent of Lebonah in 167 BCE and the Battle of Beth Horon in 166 BCE. Shortly afterward, the Maccabees won a more substantial victory at the Battle of Emmaus. The Maccabees entered Jerusalem in triumph. They ritually cleansed the Second Temple, re-establishing traditional Jewish worship there; 25 Kislev, the date of the cleansing in the Hebrew calendar, would later become the date when the festival of Hanukkah begins."

If it was a small victory in a history of defeats. Israel was still a land of trouble, mainly due to its geographic location. This little strip of land, Israel, like a causeway, linked the northern kingdoms (Assyria, Persian, Greece etc) with the southern kingdoms, principally Egypt. It was easier to cross this coastal causeway on the west of Israel than it was to travel through the deserts that bounded Israel on it eastern border. The early warfare, conducted with chariots, found it much easier to use the smoother coastal plains of the Mediterranean, than travel inland. The Hittites and the Egyptians fought a battle at Kadesh, near Homs in Syria, using the coastal plain to move their armies.

Now a new empire, Rome was coming and yet again they would be plunged into a dark world. The Jews were to be thrown into another conflict and the longed for the Messiah was prophesied and he would save them, wouldn't He? Like the first national deliverance from slavery in Egypt. At last the Deliverer would come.

> The Jews were acquainted with many of the prophecies about the Messiah, the chosen or "anointed one" as the word means in Hebrew. They firmly believed that the Messiah would be a strong and glorious earthly king who would deliver them from their Roman oppressors and form once again a great and independent Jewish kingdom. The wise men who came from the east seeking the newborn Jesus inquired at Jerusalem, *Mat 2:1 When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem Mat 2:2 and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.*"

> King Herod, who ruled Judea under the Romans, clearly understood that the Messiah the Jews expected was to be another king and thus a rival to himself. He then asked the chief priests and scribes "where the Christ was to be born" so he could eliminate the threat to his power , *Mat 2:13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him*.

Jesus was born with the devil, in the form of Herod, waiting to devour Him, *Rev 12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. Rev 12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born*.

When this man, Jesus appeared, some saw beyond His humble origins, to the glorious King, but the rest who were not privy to his birth, saw Him as a man, a prophet, a healer, and were yet to be awakened and convinced as to who He was. But the people, the Jews, had a wealth of evidence pointing to who He was and it was in the scripture. Jesus made this abundantly clear on the road to Emmaus, invoking the place where the Maccabees had their historic victory, *Luk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*.

We are dealing in our current verses with Jesus coming as the Son of Man, *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* What coming are we dealing with? The first coming or second coming? Remember that these are Jews Jesus is addressing, and He has not yet died or been resurrected.

If we go back to Daniel's private conversation with Nebucadnezzar, about the latter dream of a composite image, *Dan 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Dan 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, Dan 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Dan 2:34* ***Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay****, and brake them to pieces. Dan 2:35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces*

together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream was for him alone, but told the history of what was to come upon the world in the coming future up to the coming of the Messiah. Daniel records his conversation with Nebuccadnezzar and it becomes part of the sacred text. The dream was of an image composed of elements that would get progressively valueless. From Gold to iron and clay, all the kingdoms it represented would be in decline, the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece to Rome. But here was a thing, *Dan 2:44* ***And in the days of these kings*** *shall* ***the God of heaven set up a kingdom****, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

The kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome did not constitute the kingdoms of the world. There were the kingdoms of China, the Indus valley, Africa, and the Incas of South America. This was for Daniel a local phenomenon in his time. Eventually, under the Messiah it would reach beyond the Jews of Israel to these other kingdoms, but not yet.

The stone made without hands, hit the image on its feet and broke them, ushering in a kingdom, and in the days of this kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, the other kingdoms contained in this one image, the kingdoms of the world, would be destroyed. I take this stone made "without hands" to be the Messiah, the same person that Daniel sees in a later personal revelation, *Dan 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. Dan 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

Daniel had knowledge of the Jewish apocalypse. He saw it from two world views. He saw it from Nebuchadnezzar's faithless world view and he saw it from the Jewish believing world view. The Son of man was coming, that was certain, but was it the end of all things or just the beginning of the end. The people had to discern the signs of the times.

In the ministries of Jesus we are given three scenarios which can be separated into:
1. The signs concerning Jerusalem,
2. The sign of the abomination of desolation and
3. The coming (second?) of Christ.

In Luke He deals with the tribulation coming upon the Jews and Jerusalem*, Luk 21:20 And when ye shall see **Jerusalem compassed with armies**, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Luk 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. Luk 21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Luk 21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*.

In Matthew and the 24th chapter, He deals with the same thing, the tribulation upon the Jews and the abomination of desolation, *Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Mat 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Mat 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. Mat 24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! Mat 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened*.

I take it that Luke and Matthew are talking about the same event from different perspectives. It marks the end of the earthly nation of Israel and the end of Jewish worship in the earthly temple. From this point forward, the Kingdom of Heaven grows as a spiritual body, not as an earthly kingdom. The stone carved

without hands has struck at the feet of the kingdoms of the world and it has fallen, including Israel. Now it is the Kingdom of Christ, *Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night*.

Then in Matthew we move on from the Jewish apocalypse to the completion of Christ work in destroying the kingdoms of this world, *Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Mat 24:25 Behold, I have told you before. Mat 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. Mat 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

After this general warning we move to the specifics of the second (and only a second coming), *Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*.

Did the signs of the time make sense to the Jews who stood around Jesus? I don't know but He must have provoked a great deal of thought among them. It seemed to work for it is much on the minds of the NT Christians, *2Ti 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2Ti 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 2Ti 3:3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 2Ti 3:4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*;

The character of those godless people was a sign in itself, *Luk 12:58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give*

diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. Luk 12:59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite. You can tell the weather from the clouds but you cannot judge the signs of the end, and as a result you will pay the price of ignorance.